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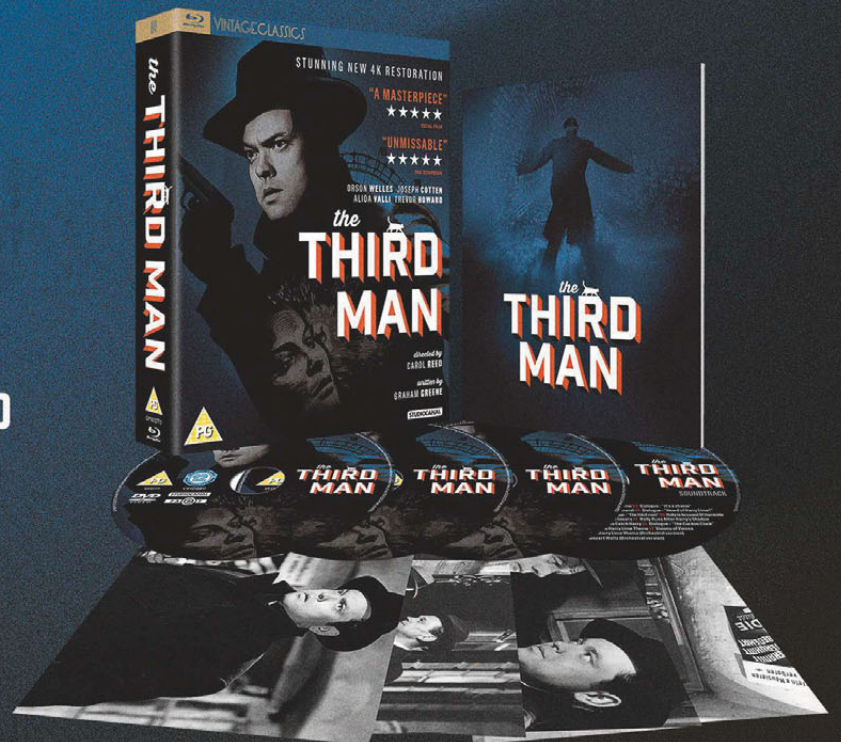
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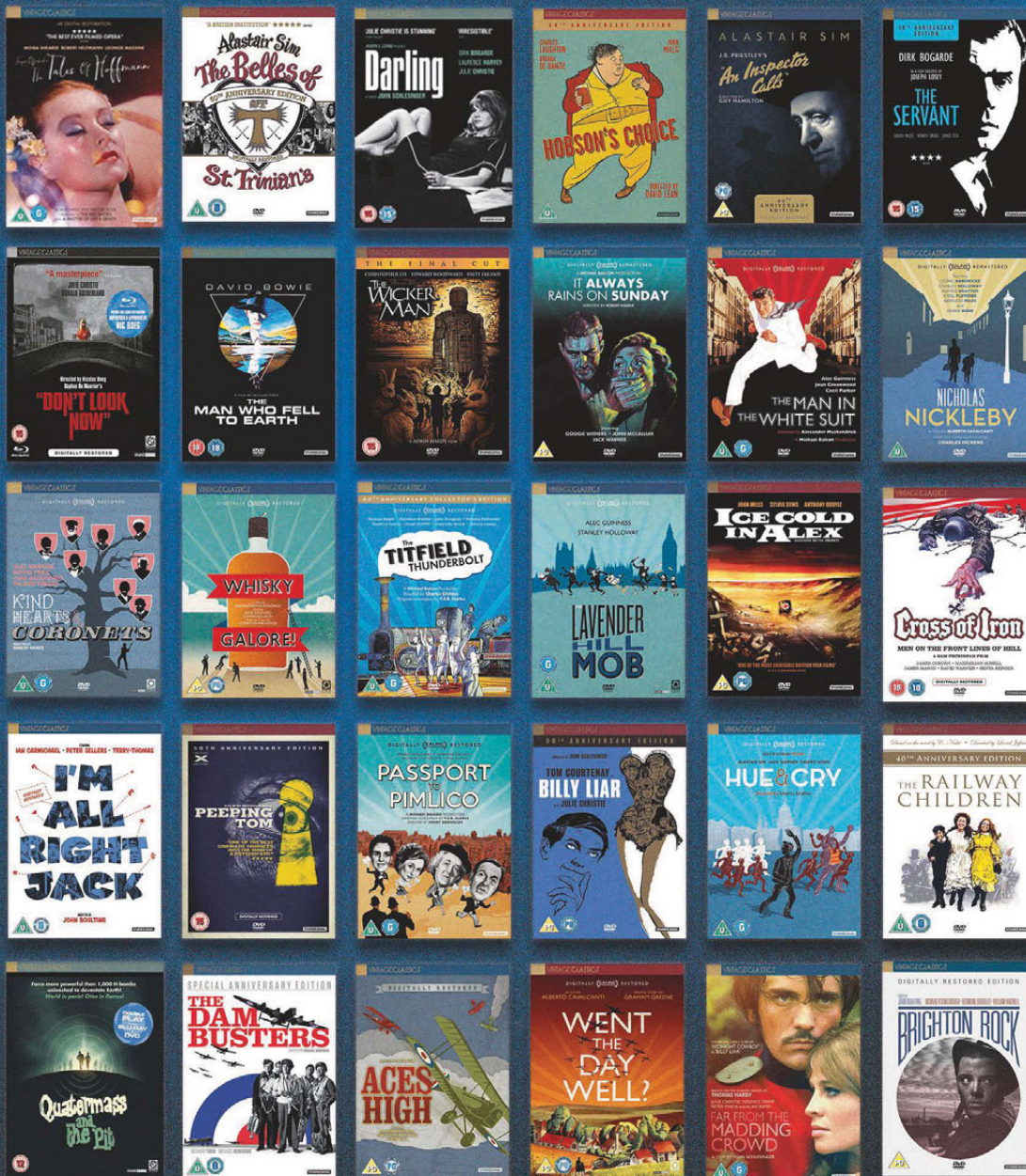
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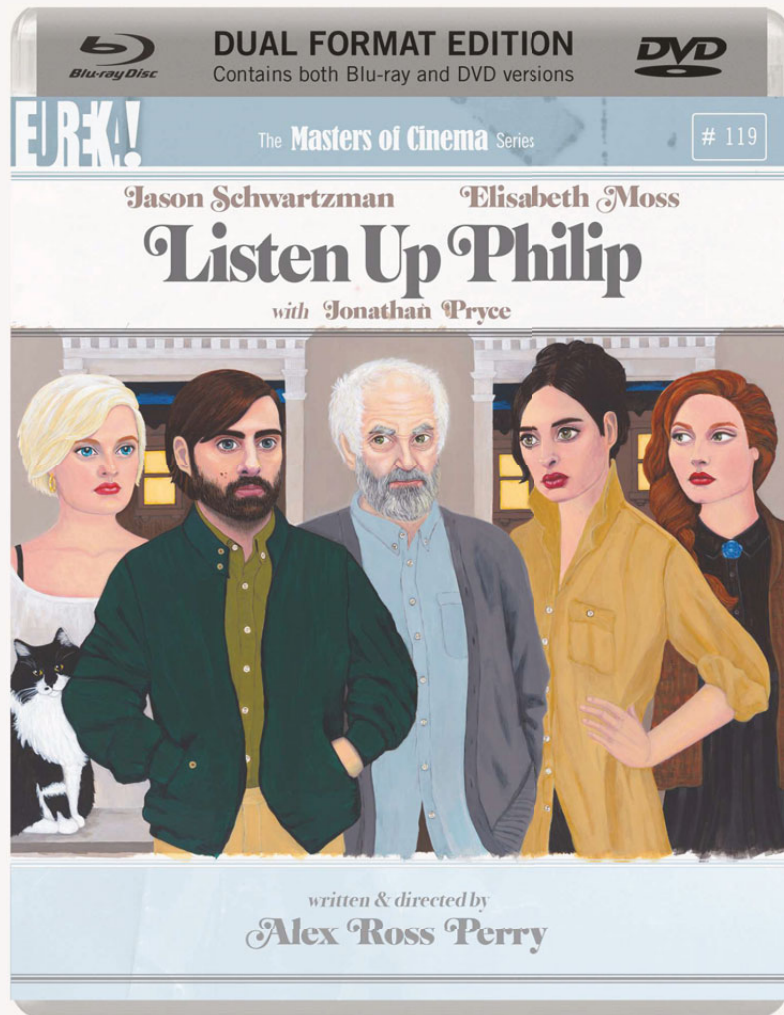
Time Out



Little White Lies



The Independent



Listen Up Philip

written & directed by
Alex Ross Perry

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Once upon a time in the west

Tomm Moore's animated fantasy *Song of the Sea* taps into the spirit of Studio Ghibli, while seeking to reclaim Irish folklore from tourist-tat leprechauniana. By **Trevor Johnston**

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As gentrification alters the fabric of old London, **Danny Leigh** revisits the city through the films that were shot there





"A comedy as weird and wonderful as its title"

Kate Muir, The Times



"A glorious
metaphysical
burlesque"

Xan Brooks, The Guardian



The Telegraph

"Surreal, twisted,
funny and kind of genius"

Cath Clarke, Time Out



"Hilarious...
transcendent...
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Little White Lies

A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE



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PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE BFI

Editorial enquiries

21 Stephen Street London W1T 1LN

t: 020 7255 1444

w: bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

e: S&S@bfi.org.uk

Social media

f: facebook.com/SightSoundmag

t: twitter.com/SightSoundmag

Subscriptions

t: 020 8955 7070

e: sightandsound@

abacusemedia.com

Volume 25 Issue 8 (NS)

ISSN 0037-4806 USPS 496-040

CONTRIBUTORS

Anne Billson is a film critic, novelist and photographer**Michael Brooke** is a freelance film critic and DVD/Blu-ray producer**Ashley Clark** is a freelance film critic and film programmer**Thomas Doherty's** books include *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933-1939***Geeta Dayal** is a music critic based in California**Bryony Dixon** is curator of silent film at the BFI National Archive**Pamela Hutchinson** writes about film at silentlondon.co.uk**Pasquale Iannone** is a film academic and critic based in Edinburgh**Alexander Jacoby** is the author of *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors***Trevor Johnston** writes on film for *Time Out***Philip Kemp** is a freelance writer and film historian**Edward Lawrenson** is a freelance writer and the co-director of the documentary *Abandoned Goods***Danny Leigh** is a journalist and novelist. He lives and works in London**Violet Lucca** is digital editor of *Film Comment***Henry K. Miller** is the editor of *The Essential Raymond Durgnat***Frances Morgan** is deputy editor of *The Wire***Tony Rayns's** 25 years of involvement in Korean cinema are celebrated in the documentary *The Not-So-Distant Observer***Jonathan Romney** is a freelance critic, writer and filmmaker**Naben Ruthnum** is a critic based in Canada**Kevin Sampson** is a Liverpool-based author and screenwriter**Sukhdev Sandhu** directs the Colloquium for Unpopular Culture at New York University**Jez Stewart** is curator of animation at the BFI National Archive

COVER

Pete Docter's *Inside Out*.

Special animation logo by Andy Smith

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on sale 4 August

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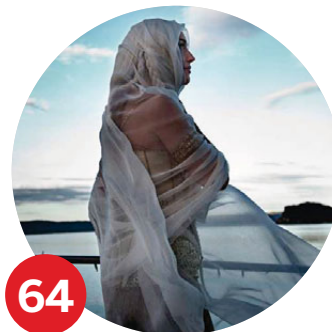
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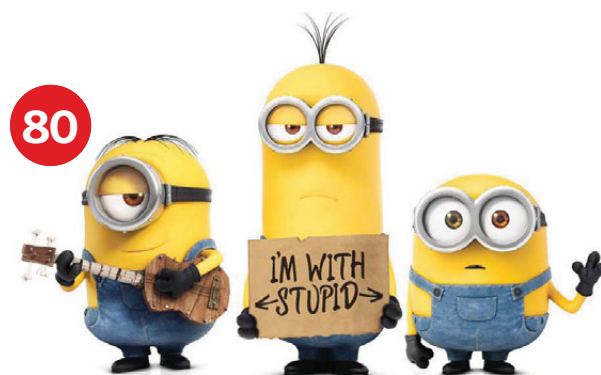
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fresh produce



black coal, thin ice
out now



a girl walks home alone at night
also available on blu-ray
released 27/07/15

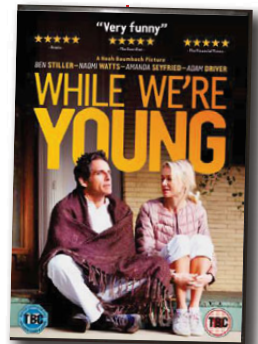


the man who saved the world
out now



mommy
released 20/07/15

while we're young
released 27/07/15



x+y
released 13/07/15



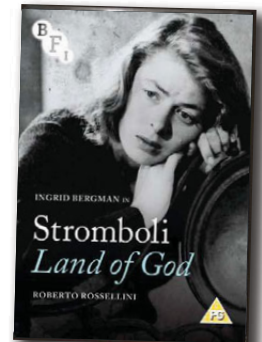
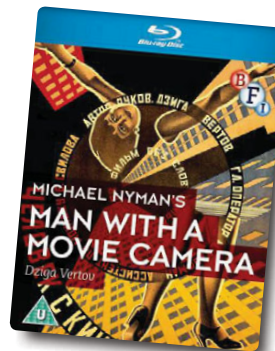
a blade in the dark
blu-ray
released 20/07/15



fear
released 20/07/15

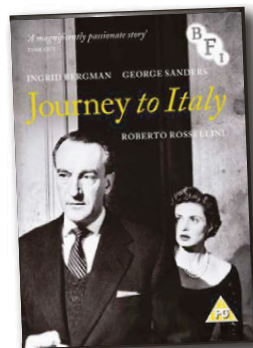
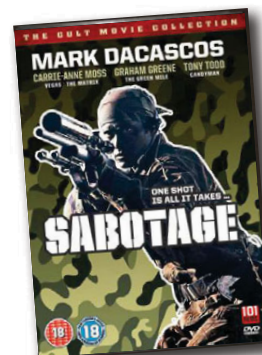


man with a movie camera
blu-ray
released 20/07/15



stromboli, land of god
released 20/07/15

sabotage
also available on blu-ray
released 27/07/15



journey to italy
released 20/07/15

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EDITORIAL

Editor

Nick James

Deputy editor

Kieron Corless

Features editor

James Bell

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Nick Bradshaw

Production editor

Isabel Stevens

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Jamie McLeish

Sub-editors

Robert Hanks

Jane Lamcraft

Researchers

Mar Diestro-Dópidio

Kelli Weston

Credits supervisor

Patrick Fahy

Credits associates

Kevin Lyons

Pieter Sonke

James Piers Taylor

Design and art direction

chrisbrowndesign.com

Origination

Rhapsody

Printer

Wyndeham Group

BUSINESS

Publisher

Rob Winter

Acting publishing

coordinator

Emma Corbett

Advertising consultant

Ronnie Hackston

T: 020 7957 8916

M: 07799 605 212

F: 020 7436 2327

E: ronnie.hackston@bfi.org.uk

Newsstand distribution

Comag Specialist

T: 01895 433800

Bookshop distribution

Central Books

T: 020 8986 4854

Sight & Sound (ISSN 0037-4806)

is published monthly by British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN and distributed in the USA by Mail Right Int., 1637 Stelton Road B2, Piscataway, NJ 08854. Periodicals Postage Paid at Piscataway, NJ and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sight and Sound c/o Mail Right International Inc, 1637 Stelton Road B2, Piscataway NJ 08854.

Subscription office:

For subscription queries and sales of back issues and binders contact: Subscription Department

Sight & Sound

Abacus e-Media

3rd Floor Chancery Exchange

10 Funnell Street, London, EC4A 1AB

T: 020 8955 7070

F: 020 8421 8244

E: sightandsound@abacusemedia.com

Annual subscription rates:

UK £45, Eire and ROW £68

£10 discount for BFI members



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The BFI is a charity, (registration number 287780), registered at 21 Stephen St, London, W1T 1LN



Editorial Nick James



HOLDING THE CENTRE

If you go up the escalators of the new Picturehouse Central in the Trocadero in London, it is difficult to recall the grim industrial multiplex that occupied the site before. Clusters of bauble lights, long sightlines and subtle earth tones now give a feeling of occasion and welcome that erases past dingy horrors. It feels as though the new entrance is intended to rival the more ancient portals to the proper theatres – the ones showing plays and musicals – that are still among the main tourist attractions in that part of town.

It's even harder to recall the pre-multiplex era, when most residents abandoned inner London for the suburbs and arthouse cinemas were leaking caverns that served dodgy coffee and carrot cake. But, as anyone who lives there or has been there recently knows, London is changing fast.

I'm thinking about London's cinemas new and old (see page 40) while I'm in Edinburgh, capital city of SNP-administered Scotland, which feels itself to be more distant from the Conservative-electing south of England than ever. But London too sits outside the Home Counties norm, the last enclave of southern English support for the Labour party – though since the inhabitants of a 'megacity' come from all over, it may not be an 'English' matter at all.

Political fragmentation of this kind is new to the UK, but it was an important factor in the election. It may reflect the perverse digital localism created by the supposedly globalising influence of social media: various apps allow like-minded souls to find each other quickly, including those who cleave mostly to their own kind. At the same time, the communications revolution aids the globalising influences creating the new London that is springing up around the city's inhabitants, almost unbidden.

The magnetism of a megacity is powerful. In recent years there's been huge investment in the city's transport infrastructure, the building work for some of which continues to wreak havoc. The 2012 Olympiad, conceived under a Labour government but delivered under the Conservative-Liberal coalition, was the spur to an international marketing success that countered the drop in confidence created by the 2008 banking collapse. But at the same time London became a notoriously expensive place in which to live, with prices, it is routinely said, being driven upwards by the huge number of properties left empty by foreign owners.

These new London cinemas have mostly gone for the hi-tech, high-comfort, high-price experience, betting that a mix of older folk, richer young folk and tourists will pay the prices



It's this context that makes the recent boom in building new and refitting old London cinemas most intriguing. Such a display of confidence in cinema as a collective 'night out' experience, such an investment of belief and bricks in its continuance as a competitive attraction, is heartening to an industry experiencing its own fragmentation – of platforms, of distribution methods, of experiential models – not to mention the dilution that comes from a glut of 'product'.

None the less, there's a conundrum. Media industries usually look to the young for their core audience, yet few youngsters can afford to live near London's centre. Perhaps that's why these cinemas have mostly gone for the hi-tech, high-comfort, high-price experience, betting that a mix of older folk, richer young folk and tourists will pay the prices – perhaps, too, anticipating soon-to-come shared virtual experiences that will one day justify the entrance fees.

Whatever the source of this investment élan, London's cinemas face the same danger that the city as a whole does: that creative life will vacate the centre and move to places where creative individuals can afford to live; to some extent it already has. The power of social media can be fickle, so we have to hope that the new London cinemas can find ways to continue attracting vital younger audiences – and, of course, cinema owners know better than I do that it's in their interests to do so.

What exhibitors can't control is the general blandening of London. There are groups – such as 'Save Soho' – dedicated to retaining some of the character of the centre as it suffers under the mini-Blitz of Crossrail's construction; but they have had little influence, it seems, on planning committees and the mayor's office.

Against that lack of influence we have one good omen. Cinemas have been at the heart of London's culture ever since the first one opened on Regent Street. And now that first cinema has reappeared, like a phoenix. Let us hope, then, that changes to property law, or a mass building programme, can make London an affordable place to live again; and then cinema prices won't need to be pegged so high. That would give Wardour Street its own Hollywood ending. **S**

IN THE FRAME

MYSTIC RIVERS



Riddle of the sands: *The Earth Trembles* and *The Sky Is Afraid* and *The Two Eyes Are Not Brothers*

Ben Rivers's intriguing installation at the BBC's old drama block in White City walks a fine line between documentary and fiction

By Isabel Stevens

In front of Wood Lane tube station in West London lies the BBC's former headquarters covered in scaffolding. Behind the station is a huge hole filled with diggers. Towering over these large building sites and hinting at their futures, is the shiny hulk of Westfield shopping centre. For on the side of the Beeb's Grade II-listed old home is a snazzy 'Television Centre' sign, promising flats, restaurants, shops and so on. But for the next couple of months, storytelling animates the complex once again as a new Artangel moving-image commission by British filmmaker Ben Rivers, *The Two Eyes Are Not Brothers*, takes over the drama block, part of the building soon to be demolished.

Since its inception 30 years ago, Artangel has conceived many installations and performances for unusual architectural spaces, prefiguring but also reaching far beyond the pop-up art installation and watch-a-film-in-an-interesting-place culture that has erupted since. The disused Coronet Cinema in Notting Hill and the old Lumiere Cinema on St Martin's Lane are just two film-related spaces the arts organisation has given a last gasp of life to. Its commissions have resulted in some of the most memorable film and video work in recent years, from Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) and Steve McQueen's *Carib's Leap/Western Deep* (2002) to Clio Barnard's *The Arbor* (2010) and Lindsay Seer's *Nowhere Less Now* (2012).

Ben Rivers is known for his semi-documentary explorations of unusual landscapes and for his quasi-ethnographic portraits of people on the fringes of society. After the remote expanses of northern Finland in *A Spell to Ward off the Darkness* (2013), the Scottish Highlands of *Two Years at Sea* (2011) and such far-flung locales as a deserted town on the Japanese island of Gunkanjima and the Polynesian archipelago of Tuvalu in *Slow Action* (2010), Morocco's Atlas Mountains and Sahara desert are the latest wild expanses to attract his 16mm Bolex camera. The drama

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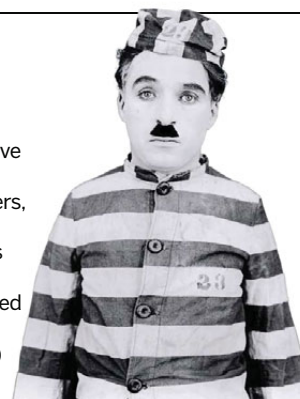
Nan Goldin

The New York photographer, known for visual diaries chronicling life on the urban fringes, gets her own Barbican season in London (6-15 July), including films she was involved with (Bette Gordon's 'Variety') and even one she inspired (Lisa Cholodenko's 'High Art', right).



The Charlie Chaplin Archives

The creator of cinema's beloved Tramp (right) is the latest legend to receive the lavish Taschen tome treatment. Personal letters, storyboards, posters, photos, sketches, scripts for unmade films and Chaplin's own unpublished writings are collected in this weighty (and pricey) archival compendium.





The BBC's drama block in West London

block – now a dusty, cavernous warehouse space but not so long ago a hive of creative activity where the BBC's sets and props were created and stored – would seem an incongruous installation site were the focus of this multi-projection project not about filmmaking itself.

The Two Eyes Are Not Brothers comprises five films and one sound installation, with each component of this labyrinthine project pointing to another film. Two of the spaces – fittingly constructed out of abandoned scenery – each show a different Rivers film about Moroccan-based independent productions: one on the set of director Oliver Laxe's *Las mimosas*; the other of British artist Shezad Dawood's aptly titled *Towards a Possible Film*. These partial remakes are not just behind-the-scenes documentaries. No dialogue or conversations about the productions are audible, and it can be hard to work out exactly what is going on in the scenes or even to know whether what we are watching appears in the 'real' films. There are fake corpses, strange diver-come-astronaut figures, and death and chase sequences, but these hallucinatory fragments are interspersed with a mixture of beguiling and mundane scenes that puncture the illusions: a sculpture of cardboard boxes being assembled for a stunt fall; a camouflaged film crew amid the vegetation, betrayed only by a sound boom. Both of Rivers's films are shot in black and white as if to intensify the sense of mystery and mythology. Footage of *Towards a Possible Film* is projected on Rivers's habitual hand-processed 16mm CinemaScope film and with its scratches, soft focus, simmering soundtrack and DeMille-like close-ups of exotic heroines, it feels like a lost reel from a silent epic.

Films about filmmaking are numerous; films



Las mimosas

that wander the sets of other productions and make fictions out of them are a much rarer breed. One such antecedent to Rivers's project is Pere Portabella's *Cuadecuc, Vampir* (1970), an on-set reimagining of Jesús Franco's *Count Dracula* (1970) that similarly slips in and out of fantasy. Carlos Santos's score for that film accompanies Rivers's take on *Towards a Possible Film*, and its eerie thumps and footsteps also reverberate around the paint-splattered screen-printing room of the drama block, amplifying the unnerving experience of an abandoned building filled with signs such as 'No entry. This room is now vacated'.

Rushes of the final film that will unite all elements of this elusive and alluring meta-filmmaking exercise can be seen in another room. *The Earth Trembles and the Sky Is Afraid and the Two Eyes Are Not Brothers* is the full title of a feature Rivers is making, to be released in cinemas later in the year. Its enigmatic words are a warning that novelist Paul Bowles once overheard whispered in a Tangier cafe. At this feature's heart is a quasi (naturally) adaptation of Bowles's brutal 1947 short story *A Distant Episode*, about a French linguistics professor travelling through Morocco who gets kidnapped, tortured and made to perform by bandits. The monstrous spectacle of the tin-can suit he is forced to wear hangs ominously in a cage in the drama block's basement – the last costume ever to be stored in a building that has fostered so many illusions. 📺

i *The Two Eyes Are Not Brothers* runs at Television Centre, London, until 31 August. A Sight & Sound discussion between Ben Rivers and Shezad Dawood will be available to watch on the BFI's YouTube channel and at artangel.org.uk

London Indian Film Festival

This celebration of contemporary Indian cinema, the largest Asian film festival in Europe, returns for its sixth edition from 16-23 July. Films and events to watch out for include Sundance Audience Award winner 'Umrika', about two brothers dreaming of life in America, Chaitanya Tamhane's drama 'Court' (right), and a masterclass by Mani Ratnam, who revolutionised Tamil-language cinema with films such as 'Nayakan' (1987) and 'Bombay' (1995).



Crimson Peak

Looking further ahead, Guillermo del Toro's latest gothic fantasy (right), a haunted house horror starring Jessica Chastain, Tom Hiddleston and Mia Wasikowska, is just one of many autumn releases to look forward to, not forgetting Pedro Costa's 'Horse Money', Sarah Gavron's 'Suffragette' (which opens the London Film Festival), Jafar Panahi's 'Taxi' and Yorgos Lanthimos's 'The Lobster'.



LISTOMANIA

MICRO-SIZE TOONS

Animals have long been an animation staple but what about really tiny toons? *Inside Out* is far from the first animation to go miniature.

- 1 **Dreams of Toyland (1908)**
Arthur Melbourne Cooper
- 2 **Brains Repaired (1911)**
Emile Cohl
- 3 **The New Gulliver (1935)**
Aleksandr Ptushko
- 4 **Fantastic Voyage (TV series, 1968-69)**
Hal Sutherland
- 5 **A Bug's Life (1998)**
John Lasseter
- 6 **Osmosis Jones (2001)**
Peter and Bobby Farrelly, Piet Kroon & Tom Sito
- 7 **The Inner Life of the Cell (2006)**
XVIVO/Harvard University
- 8 **Dot (2010)**
Sumo Science
- 9 **The Secret World of Arrietty (2010, right)**
Yonebayashi Hiromasa
- 10 **A Boy and His Atom (2012)**
Nico Casavecchia/
IBM Research



QUOTE OF THE MONTH DZIGA VERTOV

'The film drama is the opium of the people... down with bourgeois fairytale scenarios... long live life as it is!'

A restored version of Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* is rereleased in UK cinemas on 31 July



SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

Swimsuits can highlight a character's fear of exposure and alienation just as much as they can underline their sexual allure



By Hannah McGill

"He bought me a bathing suit I didn't want to wear," says Catherine Holly (Elizabeth Taylor) of her late cousin Sebastian in Joseph

L. Mankiewicz's *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959), based upon the play by Tennessee Williams and co-scripted by Gore Vidal. Sebastian's unwelcome gift is "a one-piece bathing suit made of white something", which becomes transparent in the sea water of their Spanish holiday location. In Mankiewicz's film, desirability is one piece with death. Catherine's youthful and fecund body is not only paraded as bait for the young men Sebastian himself wants to seduce, but also contrasted with dead or dying female flesh in a manner reminiscent of the anamorphic painting by an unnamed 16th-century artist in the National Gallery of Scotland, which flips the face of a young woman into a skull as the viewer moves past it. Catherine is stalked by skeletal old women, most prominently Sebastian's mother, the gaunt and ghostly Violet Venable (Katharine Hepburn). Since his death, she has taken care of his garden – a private jungle complete with carnivorous plants.

Violet's devouring maternal love is also symbolised – like that of *Psycho*'s overbearing mummy – by birds of prey. On a trip to the Galápagos Islands, Sebastian observes great black birds devouring newly hatched sea turtles: "turning them over", as Violet relates, "to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating the flesh". The spectacle of turtle mothers abandoning their offspring to near-certain death is an epiphany for Sebastian: it convinces him that God's creation is malign and conventional morality an irrelevance, and so confirms his commitment to a sex life that is not only non-procreative, but predatory and exploitative. The soft underside that we see exposed as a result, however, is not Sebastian's, but Catherine's; she calls the swimsuit "a scandal to the jaybirds". At once whorish and bridal in white, she is a sacrifice to Sebastian's appetites.

That the white suit is now celebrated as an icon of cinematic sexiness is somewhat unsettling given its context in the film. The scene that YouTube describes as 'Legendary Liz Taylor... In A Bouncy Teasing Frolic' actually shows a reluctant and humiliated woman being paraded for a lustful mob. Though it makes a show of dismay at Catherine's objectification, the film was promoted using the image of the white swimsuit – marketing which, rather like Sebastian, used a woman's body to draw the tempted towards something else entirely. Publicity pictures that show Taylor smiling in the swimsuit – which she certainly doesn't do in the film – are perhaps deliberately reminiscent of the 'bathing beauty' films of the 1940s and 50s. Proximity to water



The woman in the white suit: Elizabeth Taylor in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959)



Halle Berry in *Die Another Day* (2002)

That Liz Taylor's swim suit is celebrated as an icon of cinematic sexiness is somewhat unsettling given its context in the film



Daniel Craig in *Casino Royale* (2006)

provided such films, and the ‘beach party’ movies that followed in the 1960s, with a handy excuse to show women in otherwise prohibited states of undress. “It doesn’t hurt to show girls in skimpy bathing suits,” said Sam Z. Arkoff, a producer on the likes of *Operation Bikini* (1963), *Beach Party* (1963) and *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965), but the swimwear in these films offers its wearers more power than Catherine’s get-up, since it can convey sexual independence and sporting prowess as well as availability and allure. Underwater belle *extraordinaire* Esther Williams made no grand artistic claims for her films, but did point out that they “made it clear it’s all right to be strong and feminine at the same time”. Gidget, as portrayed by various actresses on film and television, including Sandra Dee and Sally Field, was a surfer as well as a squeaky-clean sort of sex symbol.

The male body has also been at once freed and fetishised in movie swimwear. The beach scene in *From Here to Eternity* (1953) sees Burt Lancaster far more exposed than a carefully covered Deborah Kerr; later, in his mid-fifties, Lancaster would undergo rigorous training and exercise to don trunks once again for *The Swimmer* (1968), in which his character traverses a New York suburb via its private pools. *The Graduate* (1967) similarly



Burt Lancaster in *The Swimmer* (1968)

uses immersion in a domestic swimming pool as a signifier of its male protagonist’s existential discontent. Much more deliberately sexual is the sequence in *Casino Royale* (2006) in which that eternal sufferer of various forms of discontent, James Bond, emerges from the surf in trunks. Here we have a sort of meta-objectification, with the body of Daniel Craig presented in such a way as to specifically evoke the introduction of Halle Berry and Ursula Andress in the previous Bond films *Die Another Day* (2002) and *Dr. No* (1962).

An equivalent for Esther Williams, meanwhile, was her co-star in the live swimming show ‘Billy Rose’s Aquacade’, Johnny Weissmuller. Now best remembered as a vastly popular loinclothed Tarzan in 12 movies through the 1930s and 40s, Weissmuller was also a five-time Olympic gold medal-winning swimmer. Though Tarzan aficionado Gore Vidal wrote that Weissmuller was “androgynous-looking... his body had no sex attached to it”, Williams claimed otherwise: in her 1999 memoir *The Million Dollar Mermaid* she relates how Weissmuller delighted in exposing himself to her and groping her underwater. “Maybe he took that jungle character a little too seriously,” she wrote. And maybe the monstrous Violet Venable and her beloved offshoot Sebastian would quite approve. 📺

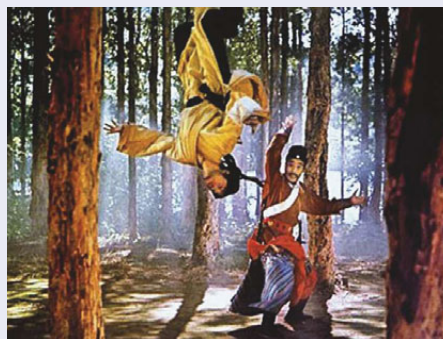
THE FIVE KEY...

KING HU FILMS

A new DVD of his classic *Dragon Inn* is a perfect excuse to discover the great Chinese *wuxia* director’s blend of grace and action

By Anne Billson

King Hu’s masterpieces have been ill-served by distributors and DVD companies in the West, despite their influence on filmmakers as diverse as Ang Lee, Tsui Hark, Zhang Yimou, Jia Zhangke, Wong Kar Wai and Hou Hsiao-Hsien. All the more reason to celebrate Eureka’s rerelease of *Dragon Inn* (1966), a big influence on the new wave of *wuxia pian*: chivalrous swordplay films combining elements from history, folklore and Peking opera. The director’s trademarks are all here: knights errant, female warriors, intrigue and impersonation, the natural landscape, and character expressed via action in wittily choreographed scenes of combat. Here, then, are five other King Hu films ripe for rediscovery.



2 A Touch of Zen (1969)

Domestic comedy and haunted house mystery give way to *wuxia* action (including the legendary fight in the bamboo forest) and a transcendental denouement. Hsu Feng, Hu’s *actrice fétiche*, plays the mysterious heroine who leaves the nerdy hero literally holding the baby. This Ming Dynasty epic turned Westerners’ preconceptions of martial-arts cinema on their head when they first saw it in the 1970s.



4 The Valiant Ones (1975)

Roy Chiao plays a military strategist who gathers a team (including samurai-like duo Bai Ying and Hsu Feng) to battle the Sino-Japanese pirates ravaging China’s southern provinces. This Ming Dynasty drama was shot back to back with *The Fate of Lee Khan*, and features many of the same actors, but swaps larkiness and intrigue for laconic heroism against its rocky coastal backdrop.



1 Come Drink with Me (1965)

Cheng Pei-Pei, best known to Western audiences as the villainess in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, was trained in ballet rather than combat, but Hu claimed his fight scenes were “always keyed to the notion of dance”. In this seminal *wuxia* hit, she plays Golden Swallow, who teams up with Drunken Cat to rescue her kidnapped brother from bandits and an evil abbot.



3 The Fate of Lee Khan (1973)

Chinese rebels pose as waitresses at a remote inn to steal a map from Lee Khan, head of the Mongol spy network. Hu’s peerless Yuan Dynasty tale morphs from jolly sitcom into gripping spy thriller, climaxing with a fight to the death in the desert. It’s also notable for providing no fewer than six female action roles, brilliantly played by the likes of Hsu Feng and Angela Mao.



5 Raining in the Mountain (1979)

While an abbot prepares to choose his successor, wealthy visitors to his monastery scheme to steal a priceless scroll. The transcendental tendencies of some of Hu’s earlier films come to the fore in his last masterpiece, which moves at a stately pace amid ravishing natural imagery until the story erupts with a pulse-quickening climax. Hsu Feng plays a thief-for-hire posing as a concubine.

LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

The Wonders, Alice Rohrwacher's poetic tale of rural beekeepers, seeks to document the struggles of life in the Italian countryside

By Pasquale Iannone

With Nanni Moretti, Paolo Sorrentino and Matteo Garrone still wondering how they managed to return from this year's Cannes Film Festival empty-handed, last year's Cannes Grand Prix-winning second feature from Italian filmmaker Alice Rohrwacher finally gets a UK release. *The Wonders* tells of a family of beekeepers (German father, Italian mother, four pre-teen daughters) whose way of life is gradually being eroded. At the centre of the drama is the eldest daughter, 12 year-old Gelsomina (Maria Alexandra Lungu), who longs to escape from her overbearing father Wolfgang (Sam Louwyck). She encourages the family to enter into a glitzy TV competition fronted by the glamorous Milly Catena (Monica Bellucci), which sets up camp in the area purporting to celebrate ancient customs and local produce. Wolfgang initially dismisses the idea before unexpectedly softening his stance.

Featuring tactile photography shot on Super 16, and a textured soundscape, the film echoes the work of Claire Denis and Sandrine Veysset, especially the latter's *Will It Snow for Christmas?* (1996), which was also shot by *The Wonders*' prolific DP Hélène Louvart.

Pasquale Iannone: How did the project begin?

Alice Rohrwacher: It began with my desire to show the changes the Italian landscape has gone through – the transformation of the countryside from a place of work to a theme park celebrating ancient values. When I was abroad, it seemed that the only thing our country invested in was this salute to the past, but I wanted to show how agricultural work in the here and now isn't being safeguarded. The Italian landscape has always been one of the great features of our country so I started from there. I went back to the area I grew up in [Umbria] and carried out lots of interviews.

PI: After *Corpo celeste*, this is the second film in which you've explored the world of adolescence.

AR: I very much like transitional characters and periods. The character of Gelsomina is very different to that of Marta [Yle Vianello] in *Corpo celeste*. I wanted to take a different kind of approach to representing that particular time in a person's life.

PI: Many critics have talked about the autobiographical aspect of *The Wonders*. Your father is a beekeeper, like the father in the film.

AR: Yes, he was a great help in terms of the practical side of beekeeping. The story of the film isn't autobiographical, but I know the world in which the film is set very well.

PI: *The Wonders* is your second collaboration with DP Hélène Louvart and the second time you've used Super 16 rather than digital – was there any particular reason behind that?

AR: If they'll let me, I hope to continue shooting on Super 16 because I identify more with this way of working. In terms of the filming itself, it's completely different. It's not a slower process as such, but it's one that has very clear limits and if I



Alice Rohrwacher: 'The film isn't autobiographical, but I know the world in which it is set very well'

don't have limits, I don't know what direction to go in. When we make films, we want to control everything, but I like it when there are small elements that remain alive and unpredictable.

PI: Pale blues and golden yellows dominate the film's visual palette – how did you approach the use of colour?

AR: We wanted to keep the colours as they were and we tried to capture the strong natural light of that area of countryside in the summer. In post-production, we only modified the whites and blacks, as filmmakers shooting on film would have done in the past.

PI: The film's sound design is interesting in that you don't use a traditional film score. All the

When we make films, we want to control everything, but I like it when there are elements that remain alive and unpredictable



The Wonders

music and sounds we hear are diegetic. There's one song in particular – Ambra Angiolini's 1997 pop hit 'T'appartengo' ['I Belong To You'] – which assumes great importance.

AR: I really like that song – by including it, I wanted to go beyond the stereotype of what people from rural areas are usually said to listen to. For me, it's a song that bridges the gap between city and countryside. I thought that the natural sounds of the location made for a very full soundscape. Besides, I think music is so powerful that I didn't want to go overboard. It's a bit like eating meat; you can have it, but not every day. I was open to having a score but when my editor and I assembled a cut of the film, we thought that the soundtrack worked well the way it was.

PI: The use of three languages in *The Wonders*, with characters moving quickly – sometimes mid-sentence – between French, German and Italian, is something you don't see that often.

AR: The way people use language tells you a lot about their character but it also tells you a lot about his/her life experience – it's not just about their nationality. For instance, the way I speak English tells you a lot about my background and so does the way I speak Italian. The way I speak tells you more about me than just where I'm from – you can tell if I've learned the language from books or from the street, if I haven't studied or if I've studied a lot. I did quite a bit of research into how the father might speak – he's someone who never has time to read a book, but then again he knows three languages and has obviously travelled to other countries. ☺

i *The Wonders* is released in UK cinemas on 17 July and is reviewed on page 64

SCISSOR SISTERS

Given the maleness of the industry, it's a surprise to realise just how many classic films have been crafted by female editors



By Mark Cousins

Brace yourselves. I've got a story to tell. Or maybe it's not a story. Maybe it's just a list. A remarkable list.

It starts with *Mad*

Max: Fury Road, which I loved. It reminded me of silent movies, Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake* and the cyberpunk *Tetsuo* films. And the editing! Action films' fight scenes are often a bore because they're incoherent or chaotic. I'm not in them. Boy was I in *Max*'s. Despite its 2,700 shots (an average shot length of just 2.6 seconds, faster cutting than in Eisenstein's films), the film didn't lose its direction of travel or geometry or point of view.

So, in the end credits, I looked for the name of its editor: Margaret Sixel. I looked her up. She cut *Babe: Pig in the City* and *Happy Feet*. Not exactly action fare. Maybe that's why the cutting's so great, I thought. She's ignoring the grammar. The bad grammar.

Seeing Sixel's name made me think of other great female editors. Thelma Schoonmaker, of course, who cut *Raging Bull* and *Goodfellas* – and *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which is an editing miracle. But then there's Blanche Sewell, who did *The Wizard of Oz*, *Grand Hotel* and *Queen Christina*; and Dorothy Spencer, who gave *Stagecoach* and *My Darling Clementine* their honeyed flow; and Adrienne Fazan who gave lift to *Singin' in the Rain* and *An American in Paris*; and Verna Fields who helped give *Jaws* its bite; and Margaret Booth, who added discipline to *Mutiny on the Bounty* and who lived to 104. Add in Carol Littleton (*E.T.* and *Body Heat*), Dede Allen (*Bonnie and Clyde*, *Reds*, *The Hustler*), Barbara McLean (*All About Eve*), Marcia Lucas (*Star Wars*), Mary Sweeney (*Mulholland Drive*, *Lost Highway*), Sally Menke (*Pulp Fiction*, *Reservoir Dogs*) and Lisa Fruchtmann (*Apocalypse Now*) and, through the lens of editing, the American movie canon starts to look very female. Not only that: it's striking how many of the above – *Mulholland Drive*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Reds*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Body Heat* – are labyrinthine films, whose cutting causes the mystery.

At this point it's tempting to ask why so many of the great films are edited by women, but before we dig into that in next month's column, let's hitch a ride a bit further and look at countries beyond America. In France, the story's just as striking. Nicole Lubtchansky edited the great films directed by Jacques Rivette: *Celine and Julie Go Boating* and *La Belle Noiseuse*. Françoise Bonnot edited more than 45 films, including Costa-Gavras's *Z* and *Missing*, Jean-Pierre Melville's *Army of Shadows* and Polanski's *The Tenant*. Marguerite Renoir's 60-plus films included *La Grande Illusion* and lots more directed by Jean Renoir. Claudine Bouché did *Jules et Jim* and films by François Ozon. Juliette Welfling edited *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* and *A Prophet*, then



I know I'm writing little more than a list here, but what a list. Have you seen all these women's names together before?

The Hunger Games in the US, before returning for the recent Cannes Palme d'Or winner *Dheepan*. Mathilde Bonnefoy edited *Run Lola Run* and *Citizenfour*. And Anne-Sophie Bion did *The Artist*.

In Germany, Juliane Lorenz edited many of the great films of Fassbinder: *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and *Querelle*. Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus did all the great Werner Herzogs: *Aguirre*, *Kaspar Hauser*, *Nosferatu* and *Fitzcarraldo*. Jane Seitz edited *Christiane F.* and *The Name of the Rose*. And Heidi Genée edited one of the great documentaries, *Marlene*.

Is it just me or is this exciting? I know that I'm writing little more than a list here, but what a list. Have you seen all these women's names together before? I haven't. Let's keep going. Let's jump to Africa. Tunisia's great director Moufida Tlatli (who became the country's culture minister) was a great editor (she cut *Halfaouine: Boy of the Terraces*, which is a gem). As I write, Abderrahmane Sissako's Mali-set *Timbuktu* is in the cinemas. It was edited by Nadia Ben Rachid, who also contributed the dreamy rhythms to the same director's *Waiting for Happiness*.

In Australia, Jill Bilocc cut a number of Baz Luhrmann's films, including *Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge*, both of which are montage films *par excellence*. Veronika Jenet edited Jane Campion's *The Piano* and much else. And Pip Karmel did *Shine*. The UK's Anne V. Coates did *Lawrence of Arabia* and *The Elephant Man*. Clare Douglas edited

United 93 and *Bloody Sunday*. And Justine Wright did Kevin Macdonald's *One Day in September*, *Touching the Void* and *The Last King of Scotland*.

Everywhere you look, some of the best editors are women. In the Soviet Union, Esfir Shub had a big influence on cinema editing. In the Netherlands, Helen van Dongen cut some of Joris Ivens's films, as well as Flaherty's *Louisiana Story*. In Belgium, Marie-Hélène Dozo edited the vivid Dardennes films: *The Promise*, *Rosetta*, *The Son*, etc. In Mexico, Gloria Schoemann edited more than 220 films, over 40 years, including many of the masterpieces of the Mexican golden age: *Macario*, *Maria Candelaria* and *The Pearl*. In Italy, Gabriella Cristiani cut Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* and *The Sheltering Sky*.

And in India, that cine-continent about which Western movie lovers tend to know little, not only are the editors' names unfamiliar, so are the films. Nonetheless, here are some of the women we should have heard of: Beena Paul, who's edited many Malayalam films including *Munnariyippu*; Deepa Bhatia, whose most famous film is probably *Dev*; Namrata Rao, who edited *Kahaani*; and Renu Saluja, who edited Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *Parinda* and many other films.

I've only scratched the surface here, of course. In Finland, Pirjo Honkasalo is a great editor, and I could go on. My point is this: the maleness of movies has been their weakness, but when you look at editing, films seem far less male. They come alive under its spotlight. Behind this list of 43 women, there are lives, of course, and talents, revelations and deferrals to men. "I always cut with ambivalence," said Dede Allen who, in *Bonnie and Clyde*, imported some of the French ideas of editing to the US. In next month's column I'll look at what she meant, and ask why women and editing are so connected in cinema. **S**

DEVELOPMENT TALE

LOVE & MERCY



Beautiful dreamer: Paul Dano as the young Brian Wilson in *Love & Mercy*

Over 27 years of shifting plots, titles, writers, directors, producers and cast, Brian Wilson was about the only constant factor

By Charles Gant

Therapist Eugene Landy first met Brian Wilson in 1975, but it wasn't until 1983 that his role in the Beach Boy's life started to expand, eventually encompassing business manager, co-producer and co-songwriter. The highly controlling relationship then unravelled, and a 1992 restraining order prevented him from ever contacting Wilson again.

Named for a song on Wilson's self-titled comeback solo album, and first announced in 1988, the film *Love & Mercy* was intended to star William Hurt as Wilson and Richard Dreyfuss as Landy. But it's fair to say that the film that is now being released, 27 years later, has absolutely no connection with that project. Far from being a celebration of the two men's unlikely partnership, it focuses on two eras of Wilson's life: the recording of *Pet Sounds* and 'Good Vibrations'; and the ultimate extraction of the singer from Landy's tenacious grip, thanks in part to the intervention of Melinda Ledbetter, who had become Wilson's girlfriend.

In 2006, *Variety* reported that producer

Mark Gordon (*Saving Private Ryan*) had made a deal with Wilson to tell his life story in a feature film, to be directed by David Leaf, who had chronicled the creation of the long-gestating Beach Boys album *Smile* in a 2004 TV documentary *Beautiful Dreamer*.

The next incarnation saw producer John Wells, the prolific executive producer of films and TV shows including *ER* and *The West Wing*, take the lead: a script called *Heroes and Villains*, by a writer named Michael Lerner. But this project also struggled to gain traction until Wells took it to fellow producer Bill Pohlad (*The Tree of Life*, *12 Years a Slave*) in 2009. Pohlad recalls: "I believe it was Brett Ratner to direct, and I think Nicolas Cage was involved somehow. For me it's always about the script. It was a good script but it wasn't exactly the kind of thing I would want to do as producer. I told them that I was really excited about the idea, but not this version, so if it didn't work out, they should come back to us and we can start over." Pohlad's company River Road in fact passed on the project twice in 2009, before John Wells Productions indicated that they were willing to discuss a new development deal and a fresh approach to the screenplay.

Ten years before, Wells had developed a passionate interest in *The Pet Sounds Sessions* box-set. Now, as he boarded *Heroes and Villains*, he came to meet Wilson and Ledbetter, hearing the story of how the pair met in the

Cadillac dealership where she worked. "She doesn't know who he is, she's just really charmed by him. It just struck me as she was talking that that would be a nice way into the story, from Melinda's point of view."

Setting the Lerner script to one side, Pohlad met different writers, making a connection with Oren Moverman, who had co-written the 2007 Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* with Todd Haynes, and written and directed *The Messenger* (2009). Moverman responded to Pohlad's idea of focusing on two points of Wilson's life – at this stage there was also a third, the period in the middle when the musician was strung out and basically not getting out of bed – and proposed a title change. ("[It's not] the story of the bad guys and good guys in Brian's life," Moverman told *Variety*. "It's the story of the depths of his genius, and of his emotion and hurt.") Moverman was hired to write *Love & Mercy* in May 2011. Both Lerner and Moverman receive screenplay credits on the resulting film.

At this stage, Pohlad says, "There was a list of people we talked about for writer, and there was a list of people we talked about for director, and Oren was on both lists. We had, in the back of our minds, the possibility that he would be a candidate for directing, but we didn't mix the two conversations." As it happened, Moverman did emerge as the producers' choice to direct, but he eventually made an alternative

suggestion: Pohlad, whose only previous go at directing was the little-acclaimed 1990 feature *Old Explorers*, should take the reins.

In fact, Pohlad had been looking to direct again, and was set to do so with a film called *Genius*, from a John Logan adaptation of a Scott Berg book, with Colin Firth and Michael Fassbender. “We couldn’t get their schedules together, we were waiting and waiting,” Pohlad says. (British theatre director Michael Grandage ultimately made the film, starring Firth and Jude Law.) Pohlad was also attached to direct a movie about Formula 1 racing driver Jackie Stewart. Now his “co-creative” collaboration with Moverman on the *Love & Mercy* script gave him the confidence to return to directing with this particular project. Wells and producing partner Claire Rudnick Polstein were supportive – after all, Wells had himself made the transition to directing with his features *The Company Men* and *August: Osage County*.

Pohlad had always envisioned that two actors should play Wilson, covering the different periods – or in fact three, as originally conceived. Now when it came to casting, “There was a little, not backtracking, but people would say, ‘Why don’t you try one actor? It could be great for some actor who was aged in the middle.’” Pohlad stuck to his vision, with Paul Dano playing Wilson in the *Pet Sounds* era, and John Cusack in the 1980s. Paul Giamatti was cast

You are trying to cast from a realm of actors that mean something, but we weren’t forced to get super A-list actors

as principal antagonist Landy, with Elizabeth Banks taking the pivotal role of Ledbetter – a significant emotional access point for the film.

With casting, a producer’s focus is often more on the star power required to attract financing, and a director’s on purely the most appropriate actors for the characters, so Pohlad’s dual role offered a potential internal conflict. “It was a combination,” the filmmaker says. “It wasn’t necessarily cast-dependent. Definitely you want a separation between being a producer and a director on a project, because there needs to be that dynamic back and forth. But even as a director, I’m going to process certain things and think: it would be great if this particular actor would do it, but it may not help us in marketing the movie and getting it financed. You don’t want to be completely dependent on that but you don’t want to be oblivious of it, either. For me, Paul Dano, one can argue how marketable he is or not. He’s a great actor and I thought that was a reasonable call, but it was mostly a creative decision. And then with John Cusack, it was as much about a creative decision. Certainly you are trying to cast from a realm of actors that mean something, versus complete unknowns, but we weren’t forced to get super A-list actors. It felt that the budget could be in a reasonable range that we could do it with the people we were talking about.”

i *Love & Mercy* is released on 10 July and is reviewed on page 60

THE NUMBERS LIVE EVENTS

By Charles Gant

It’s hard to know whether arthouse releases die down in the summer because the independent cinemas are apt to play blockbuster fare, or independent cinemas programme blockbusters due to the lack of commercially viable arthouse alternatives – either way, June once again proved tough for the indie scene. While audiences flocked to *Jurassic World*, there were no strong arthouse hits, unless you count middlebrow crossover contender *Mr. Holmes*, starring Ian McKellen. (And John Maclean’s *Slow West* had yet to be released at press time.)

What few successes there were, however, owe a significant proportion of their box office to live events. The strategy has now become commonplace for documentaries, the thinking being that theatrical audiences need the incentive of some extra element, such as a talent Q&A. Distributor Dogwoof took this route with *The Look of Silence*, Joshua Oppenheimer’s follow-up to his Bafta-winning *The Act of Killing*. Louis Theroux hosted, on the Sunday evening of the opening weekend, and the interview was beamed into 91 cinemas (as opposed to the 29 venues that played the film for its full release). More than half the opening weekend gross of £52,600 was earned this way.

For independent producer-director Amir Amirani, unknown to UK cinema audiences, a satellite-beamed live event was even more crucial for the theatrical launch of his self-distributed *We Are Many*, documenting the global demonstrations against the Iraq war in 2003. Since Amirani himself would not be a major draw, the Jon Snow-hosted Q&A included the likes of Damon Albarn and Omid Djalili, who both feature in the film.

The event yielded £43,000; at press time, *We Are Many* had a cumulative total of £77,500.

The feature *London Road*, based on the National Theatre musical, was a natural candidate for the live-event treatment – in fact, given the theatrical nature of the material, a one-off revival on stage, beamed live into cinemas, would arguably have been more appropriate than turning it into a feature film. Instead, three days before *London Road*’s full release, the premiere was transmitted live to 270 cinemas nationwide, accompanied by a Q&A featuring director Rufus Norris, writer Alecky Blythe and actress Anita Dobson. The event grossed £156,000. At press time, the total gross for *London Road*, which for its actual release opened in a more modest 35 cinemas, stands at £282,000.

In the case of Debbie Tucker Green’s *Second Coming*, a live satellite event was beyond the resources of the stakeholders, and arguably would not have worked in any case. Its opening weekend figure was pretty dismal – £1,700 from four cinemas – but the art of the possible was demonstrated by what happened next. With a spend of just £110 on flyers and highly targeted Facebook adverts – for example, users who had ‘liked’ both the film’s star Idris Elba and Hackney Picturehouse saw an ad for the screening in that venue – organisers delivered packed houses for individual events at three cinemas, adding £3,500 to the box office, which now stands at £8,800. The numbers are small but, as Picturehouse’s Paul Ridd says, “The success of event screenings at targeted venues is testament to how with some nifty promotion and the incentive of strong extra content, smaller films like *Second Coming* can really flourish in an environment dominated by titles with bigger marketing spends.”



The society of the spectacle: the live Q&A for the opening weekend of *The Look of Silence*

FACING THE CRITICS

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

The accusations of bias that met the BFI's decision not to support the theatrical release of *Dear White People* have given us plenty to digest



By Ben Roberts

Dear White People, Justin Simien's US college-set satire about racial politics in a predominantly white environment (see page

32), has arrived in the UK and hit a nerve.

I didn't anticipate some of the conversations that followed an application made to us by its distributor, The New Black Film Collective, for Lottery funding to support the film's cinema release. It was an application we turned down for what we thought were everyday reasons, but it led to claims of unconscious bias on our part, and a discussion about wider institutional racism throughout the UK film industry that reached Radio 4's Today programme. It has made me think again about the difficult environment for Black, Asian and minority ethnic films in the UK and, frankly, anything that isn't proven mainstream.

The brief history of *DWP* is that director Simien raised around \$40,000 of early production funds through an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign, something he says he did because he knew he was going to have difficulties getting the film made through traditional channels. It was the profile of that campaign – as much as the money – which helped get the film into production and when *DWP* premiered at Sundance in 2014, it received great reviews and was picked up for a US release by Lionsgate, going on to take more than \$4 million at the US box office.

It didn't find a UK theatrical distributor at Sundance, however, and was subsequently acquired by Netflix for its subscription video-on-demand service, and by Signature, which intended to give the film a straight-to-DVD release. The film played to sold-out audiences and a great response at last year's BFI London Film Festival and again at this year's BFI Flare.

Priscilla Igwe, TNBFC's managing director, saw an opportunity here and partnered with Signature to try to get the film booked into cinemas for a theatrical run on what would be the company's first film as a distributor.

And that's where we came in. Or rather didn't. One of TNBFC's biggest hurdles was the outdated theatrical window that still means a film released on to other platforms – DVD, VOD or TV – less than 16 weeks after its cinema release, will struggle to get bookings from the chain cinemas, and most will flat-out refuse. Even Picturehouse, the chain with many of the best sites for *DWP*, is now owned by Cineworld, and seems largely

'Dear White People' played to sold-out audiences and a great response at the BFI London Film Festival and BFI Flare



Dear White People


bound by its parent company's rules. The August DVD release date set by Signature to get out ahead of a Netflix window in October was less than four weeks from the planned cinema release in July, leaving TNBFC with only the smaller but more flexible independents in a position to offer screens. Because we only use Lottery money to fund something additional to a film's release beyond what should be standard (either through more screens or a day-and-date release online), we couldn't find a reason to support it.

So those are the arguments as we see them, but Priscilla has made some fair challenges about whether the window is really the only issue. Why, for example, did no one buy the film at Sundance in the first place? And if at least some of these cinemas have flexibility around windows, why are they still not playing it in any big number?

For all its strengths, there were other problems for UK distributors. It's a US political satire, a tone of filmmaking that has always had a harder time in the UK with an audience who don't think the film is for or about them, and maybe distributors failed to see how they could convert some of its more universal themes.

But some other recent films dealing with or in other ways presenting ethnic diversity on screen, such as *Timbuktu*, *Girlhood* and *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, have done well, so there are some positives – although Debbie Tucker Green's *Second Coming* has struggled despite great reviews. *Selma*, *Belle* and *12 Years a Slave* have worked too in a very mainstream way. On that basis I still put the *DWP* issues down, in part, to that DVD and Netflix date.

But perhaps that barrier is also the opportunity. Netflix is doing some extraordinary things. It has picked up all rights to Cary Fukunaga's *Beasts of No Nation* starring Idris Elba, and last month paid a mindblowing \$60 million for all rights to Brad Pitt's *War Machine*. How much better would *Second Coming* have done if its distributor had taken the film straight to multiple platforms?

DWP is yet to be released as I write so I can't say where Priscilla has ended up, though I sense her campaign is working and she has started to pick up bookings. In any event it's been a hard but constructive conversation. We need distributors like Priscilla who are committed to working on challenging films in a challenging environment, but who can be a part of the industry on an equal footing. So we will have to think how we can offer better support. 

Ben Roberts is director of the BFI Film Fund @bfibfen

IN PRODUCTION

● **Marc Forster**, director of *Monster's Ball*, *Finding Neverland*, *Quantum of Solace* and *World War Z*, is to adapt the first part of a trilogy of films based on *The Downslope*, an unmade script written by Stanley Kubrick in 1956 and set during the American Civil War. Forster will direct the first in the trilogy, then serve as producer on the other two.

● **Ben Wheatley**, whose adaptation of J.G. Ballard's *High Rise* was for many a surprise omission from Cannes, has begun shooting *Free Fire*, a story set in Boston in the 1970s, about an arms deal gone wrong between two Irishmen and local gangsters. Written by Wheatley and his regular writing partner Amy Jump, the film is backed by Film 4 and the BFI – and with some chap named Martin Scorsese serving as executive producer.

● **Eugène Green** is currently shooting his sixth feature, the Franco-Belgian co-production *Le Fils de Joseph*. Written by Green, the film follows a young man who sets off to look for the father he has never known, only to find a cynical, unpleasant man who he then attempts to kill. Mathieu Amalric plays the father, Victor Ezenfis his son.

● **Michael Haneke** has announced that he has abandoned production of his feature *Flashmob*, which was to have been shot in Austria this summer, "owing to several reasons that I do not wish to discuss". Haneke has hinted, however, that he may now travel to France to work on a separate, as-yet-unconfirmed project.

● **Danny Boyle** may be a stage closer to directing the long-rumoured sequel to *Trainspotting* after Ewan McGregor, speaking at the Edinburgh Film Festival, said he would be open to starring. Bad blood had existed between the director and star since Leonardo DiCaprio was cast over McGregor in *The Beach*.

● **Ava DuVernay** (below), director of *Selma*, is being linked to Marvel's upcoming Black Panther film (the character was a supporting figure in the 1960s Avengers comics, and the first black superhero in the Marvel world). Chadwick Boseman, who played James Brown in the recent biopic *Get on Up*, has been announced as the star.



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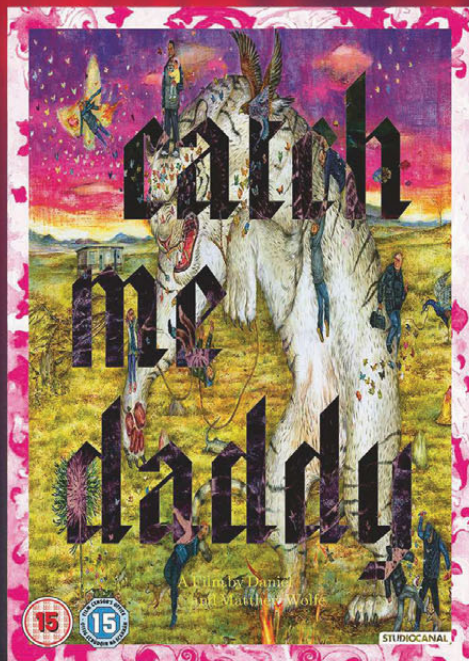


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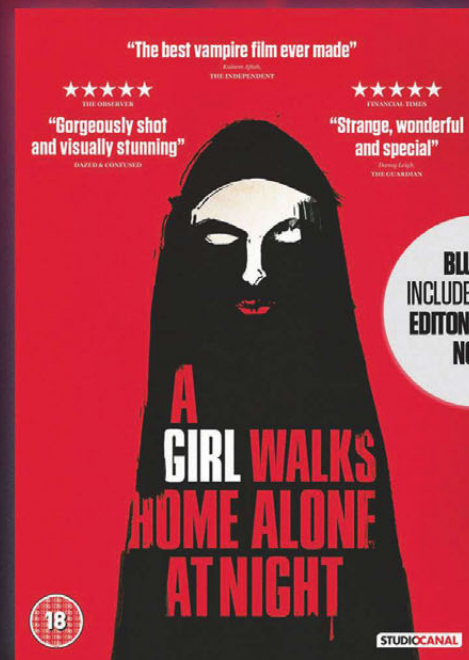


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TALES OF ORDINARY SADNESS



Pete Docter's 'Inside Out', which explores a young girl's growing pains from the perspective of the animated emotions inside her mind, is a spellbinding return to form for Pixar Studios, offering a remarkably thorough exploration of the human psyche and a shrewd examination of the value of sadness in everyday life

By Jonathan Romney

POETRY IN EMOTION
Inside Out explores the mental landscape of the film's young protagonist, Riley, through five personified emotions: (main picture, from left) Anger, Disgust, Joy, Fear and Sadness; (below) Joy dragging Sadness after she becomes too tired to walk



One of the most celebrated and poignant scenes in *Mad Men* comes in the final episode of season one: meeting a delegation from Eastman Kodak, ad executive Don Draper pitches his proposed campaign for the company's new slide projector. Don tells the Kodak people how a veteran copywriter once explained to him the concept of nostalgia: "It's delicate, but potent... In Greek, nostalgia literally means 'the pain from an old wound'. It's a twinge in your heart far more powerful than memory alone."

As he talks, Don uses the projector to give a slide show, using images of his own home life, moments with his wife and children that are all the more poignant because we know the Drapers' family happiness is long past. In a speech that expertly works the emotions of those present, Don turns a simple machine into something mythical, a resonant metaphor for memory and the possibility of accessing it. The projector, he explains, is really "a time machine... It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. It's not called 'The Wheel', it's called 'The Carousel'. It lets us travel the way a child travels – round and around and back home again, to a place we know we are loved."

The idea of nostalgia, and the moment when we discover its meaning – when we first realise that the past truly is the past – is central to *Inside Out*, the latest animation from Pixar Studios. Directed and co-written by Pete Docter – who made *Monsters, Inc.* and *Up* – *Inside Out* is, among other things, about the dawning of nostalgic awareness within an 11-year-old girl named Riley. Early in the film, Riley and her parents leave their Minnesota home – where her happiness stems





from domestic stability and her love of ice hockey – and move to San Francisco. Wrenched away from her old friends and vulnerable in her new school, Riley – overwhelmed by a massive surge of sorrow – undergoes a sort of psychic breakdown. But the payoff of the narrative is that sadness is valuable, for it is through that emotion, and eventually her ability to express it, that Riley repairs her damaged bond with her parents – and returns to the place she knows she is loved. Once-happy memories have taken on the tinge of sadness, but these same memories, now charged with the ache of nostalgia, are at once Riley’s ‘wound’ and its cure. The film’s lesson is that you can’t go home again (although Riley contemplates escaping back to Minnesota) but you can remember home – and that, *Inside Out* concludes, is the key to embarking on a new life, in this case adulthood.

Now this account of the story is somewhat misleading, because it suggests that Riley is the protagonist; in fact, *Inside Out* lives up to its title for Riley is really, as the makers have termed it, the film’s “setting”. The story takes place inside her head: it begins with her birth, in a dark unformed space that is her nascent psyche. In an extraordinary *fiat lux* moment, the newborn Riley’s first perception of the world, in the form of her parents’ beaming faces, appears on a sort of primal movie screen, resembling a white glowing cloud. In the dark space of consciousness there appears the first of the film’s characters proper – personifications of Riley’s feelings, beginning with Joy, depicted as a big-eyed, exuberant Tinkerbell-like sprite and voiced by Amy Poehler. Joy is soon joined by Sadness (Phyllis Smith, from the American *The Office*), a lugubrious blue nerd-girl in horn-rims and turtleneck sweater. Others come along to form a team of five: Anger (Lewis Black), a squat, combustible creature of red sponge; Disgust (Mindy Kaling), who safeguards little Riley against such dangers as broccoli; and Fear (Bill Hader), a quivering neurotic.

These five station themselves at a USS Enterprise-style console inside Riley’s head, monitoring her responses and working hard to ensure her healthy psychic functioning. The premise is similar to the old *Beano* strip ‘The Numskulls’, in which a race of little men operate the human body, and even more so to the early 90s US sitcom *Herman’s Head*, about a magazine fact checker and four personified aspects of his psyche who argue constantly about his thought processes. *Inside Out* has no villain: the conflict is all internal. Frenetically upbeat Joy – with Poehler bringing strong echoes of her TV role as *Parks and Recreation*’s eager-beaver small-town official Leslie Knope – is determined to captain Riley’s psyche, and constantly battling Sadness, who can’t help turning the globes that represent Riley’s memories from gold to blue, recharging them with sorrow. The story concludes in Joy’s acceptance of Sadness as a vital functional part of Riley’s psychic economy; the film actually suggests that the pursuit of happiness at the expense of other emotions is a misguided compulsion, whatever that pursuit’s place in the ideologies of Disney and the USA.

What’s remarkable is how thoroughly *Inside Out* explores its premise, constructing a model of the human psyche that is visually and narratively entertaining, in a film calculated to appeal to the widest possible age range. Adults will relish the psychological, cultural and cinematic in-jokes; small children will enjoy the





adventure and such oddball characters as Riley's near-forgotten imaginary friend Bing Bong, a cat-elephant hybrid made of candyfloss (a sort of meta-character embodying the polymorphous bricolage of the pre-school imagination, but also a parody of the Jar Jar Binks strain of cloying goofiness).

Meanwhile, in an educational and/or therapeutic turn, viewers of Riley's age or slightly older are afforded an insight into their own emotional dynamics. Powerful visual metaphors evoke the way in which children's maturing minds gradually let go of childish things: in Riley's psyche, redundant memories literally dissolve into dust, while seemingly solid centres of obsession, like her beloved hockey, depicted as one of the 'personality islands' that define her identity, crash into the abyss of oblivion. More than most films given the label, *Inside Out* is genuinely a coming-of-age story – although it is clear that this particular adventure depicts only one of many comings-of-age that Riley will face. As the film ends, it leaves us, and Riley's emotions, contemplating her future as her now overhauled and refortified psyche prepares her for adolescence.

Inside Out itself plays on a strong sense of visual nostalgia, which comes across in the design. Pixar films have characteristically established idiosyncratic worlds with their own sets of rules and possibilities; the most radical version yet of this tendency, *Inside Out* dreams up an entire geography for an imaginary space in which every element stands for some aspect of the mind. We

The film suggests that the pursuit of happiness at the expense of other emotions is misguided, whatever that pursuit's place in the ideologies of Disney and the USA

NOSTALGIA FOR THE LIGHT
(From top) Riley's memories of her early childhood in Minnesota; Riley's first day at her new school in San Francisco; Joy and Sadness travelling through the outer reaches of Riley's psyche

begin in the still amorphous space of a baby's consciousness, where new memories, as they form, appear in the shape of balls glowing gold (for happiness), which slide along rails into a pinwheel mechanism resembling a set of brightly coloured flowers: a basic, bright *Play School*/*Sesame Street* phase of the imagination. The emotions themselves are ostensibly simple cartoon characters in vivid colours – like 3D versions of the schematic figures that might have appeared in American instructional cartoons in the 1950s. They actually have a 50s look: Fear, anxious and buttoned-up in V-neck and bow-tie; Disgust, an eye-rolling high-school princess in ballet shoes and neckscarf; Sadness, resembling a dumpy high-schooler who's just read *Bonjour Tristesse*.

But the characters also embody something new in terms of CGI: entirely unrealistic figures, they come across overtly as representations, ideas, rather than as autonomous creatures. Seemingly solid in form, they prove on closer inspection to be formed of much the same luminous fibre as Riley's mind-screen: their hair a textured hybrid of wool and light, their bodies dissolving into rough flecks of light at the edges. These are immaterial creatures, far removed from the plastic-looking solidity of the *Toy Story* or *Monsters, Inc.* characters.

Inside Out lays out a map of the psyche as both landscape and economy – one conceived in strikingly mechanistic terms, which may or may not find approval among followers of such child development theorists as Jean Piaget or John Bowlby. Still, *Inside Out*'s psychology displays a coherence that seems all the more witty, vivid and sophisticated in the context of a commercial family animation. The filmmakers took inspiration from the 'psychoevolutionary' theory propounded by US psychologist Robert Plutchik, who suggested that behaviour was motivated by eight basic emotions – the five featured in the film, plus surprise, anticipation and trust. (Emerging from the press screening in Cannes, my colleague Leslie Felperin commented, "Where was Guilt?" One can only imagine that it will feature strongly in an eventual sequel about Riley's teenage years, alongside Libido, Angst and other adult favourites).

With its concrete representation of abstract states, *Inside Out* follows a long tradition that takes in medieval passion plays, allegorical odysseys such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and the 17th-century French 'Carte de Tendre', which depicted the vicissitudes of love in the form of an imaginary map. There are also echoes of Norton Juster's 1961 children book *The Phantom Tollbooth* (made into an animated feature by Chuck Jones, released in 1970), which imagined a journey through a similarly allegorical landscape of the imagination.

The mindscape in *Inside Out* is mapped out in visual and verbal wordplay that puts abstractions into concrete form. Wandering through the expanses of Riley's psyche, Joy and Sadness attempt to travel back to HQ on a Train of Thought. En route, they admire the landscape below: "There's Inductive Reasoning, there's Déjà Vu... There's Critical Thinking, there's Déjà Vu..." The control room of Riley's mind looks out on a range of islands, concretions of themes that define her personality as it presently is: islands of Family, Friendship, Honesty and Hockey, a Goofball Island representing childhood merriment.

The Imagination is represented as a theme park filled with things that are beginning to



disappear as Riley matures: we witness the demolition of the Stuffed Animal Hall of Fame, and see a princess-style palace explode into fairy dust, a shower of rainbow-coloured pixels (a wink at an archetype aggressively marketed by Walt Disney, Pixar's parent company since 2006). This theme of psychic transformation and renewal runs throughout. Riley's memories stack up to be stored in a vast brain-shaped library, but there isn't room for every one. So a team of maintenance workers, resembling *Despicable Me*'s Minions, weed out redundant memories: they throw away most American presidents and the piano pieces that Riley has learned (but leave 'Heart and Soul' and 'Chopsticks').

Inside Out's two most inspired extended gags are specifically filmic. One is its representation of the formation of dreams as a Hollywood-style studio, with posters for hit productions – I'm Falling Down a Well, Someone Is Following Me. It's here that the sleeping mind's movies are shot, with a 'reality distortion filter' fitted on the camera lens.

The other *tour de force* sequence, and the most bizarre – like a collision between the aesthetics of CGI and LSD – follows Joy, Sadness and Bing Bong as they venture into a forbidden area, the zone of Abstract Thought. There, their three-dimensional shapes are drastically altered – dismantled, stripped down, Picasso-fied. This sequence is at once an account of thought processes as applied to visual forms, and a joke about the structures of CGI illusionism itself, of which 3D realism is only one possible manifestation. "We're abstracting," yell the characters, as they devolve into symbols, colours, disconnected planes. "Oh no, we're non-figurative."

In its complexity and audacity, *Inside Out* feels like a return to Pixar's former inspiration and depth, following a spell in which the studio's brilliance seemed to have faded and its brand identity dissipated. This was the period in which the company's long-term figurehead John Lasseter became increasingly involved with Disney as its chief creative officer, and in which Lasseter's own sub-par *Cars* (co-directed by Joe Ranft, 2006) spawned the bland *Planes* spin-offs made by DisneyToon Studios. Pixar's *Brave* (2012) felt worryingly close to the aesthetic of its rival DreamWorks, while *Monsters University* (2013) was a weary rehash of former glories. Notwithstanding the brilliance of 2010's *Toy Story 3* (a film I'll admit to severely underrating in my *Sight & Sound* review at the time), it has been six years since Pixar invented something entirely new, in *Up*.


Inside Out, however, offers not only a complete new from-the-ground-up concept, but one that truly displays the Pixar rather than the Disney touch (significantly, at the Cannes press screening, there was some booing for Disney's opening ident, but cheers for Pixar's). The film



MIND GAMES
The control room of Riley's mind (above) looks out on a series of islands that represent aspects of her personality in *Inside Out*; and Pixar's former glories (below, from left) *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), *Up* (2009) and *Toy Story 3* (2010)

is very much in keeping with a distinctive theme of the Pixar cycle: the elaboration of a theory of childhood and maturing, one that runs through *Toy Story*'s dramas of object attachment, *Monsters, Inc.*, which explores the creative potential of childhood fear, and *Up*, with its reminder that the old were once children too.

But perhaps what most decisively makes *Inside Out* a Pixar film is its dimension of self-awareness. The studio's films have always been famous for their direct address to the emotions, for the ways in which they manage to deeply move even the most sophisticated viewers (you can, if you like, take that as a synonym for 'critics') by bringing into play simple emotional themes treated in a complex and intelligent fashion. On one level, *Inside Out* offers a lesson in emotional literacy that's as mundane as any offered by your average young adult novel – Sadness shouldn't be repressed but valued. Tears matter too.

Yet it gets this message across in a singularly self-reflexive manner: showing us Riley's feelings at work, literally pushing her buttons, the film offers an open demonstration of Pixar's own techniques for manipulating us emotionally. With those techniques fully laid bare, *Inside Out* challenges us to stay unaffected – or to partake consciously and freely in the pleasure of being manipulated. When Sadness gets her moment of glory at the end, as Joy realises that she is not the only player that counts in the psychic economy, I defy you not to get an empathetic lump in the throat. Pixar still knows better than anyone in the movie game how to work that "twinge in your heart". It's delicate, but potent. 

 ***Inside Out* is released in UK cinemas on 24 July and is reviewed on page 76**

'Inside Out' feels like a return to Pixar's former inspiration and depth, following a spell in which the studio's brilliance seemed to have faded





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A LIFE IN PICTURES



British animators with artistic aspirations beyond the corporate sector have rarely found it easy to make a living in the UK, which makes the longevity and creative tenacity of the much missed company founded by John Halas and Joy Batchelor 75 years ago all the more worthy of celebration

By Jez Stewart

Halas & Batchelor Cartoon Films was founded 75 years ago in a world largely indifferent to its arrival. By 1940, with the exception of a couple of bright sparks – Len Lye and Norman McLaren most obviously spring to mind – British animation had failed to make much of a dent in the thoughts of audiences or film producers. Such was the quantity and quality of cartoons available from the US, only the brave or foolhardy exhibitor found room for the limited British product available. Anson Dyer, once touted as Britain's answer to Walt Disney, had been the last to have a serious crack at producing cartoon entertainment shorts, starting a series based on comic monologues by the entertainer Stanley Holloway. Within three years Dyer's financial backer, Archibald Nettlefold, had withdrawn his support and the studio switched to producing cinema commercials full-time.

John Halas, born in Hungary in 1912, and Joy Batchelor, born in Watford in 1914, had very different upbringings, and drifted separately into animation through a mix of accident and design. They both experienced the ups and mostly downs of the industry in the 1930s before John was brought to London to direct *Music Man* (1938) and he hired Joy as an animator. Their first joint business was a graphic design and illustration studio, but on 18 May 1940 they formed an animation company under the wings of the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson.

These were not the most auspicious circumstances in which to start a studio. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, with Hungary on the side of the Axis powers, John was labelled an enemy alien, and, after their marriage, Joy lost her British citizenship until 1946. They were placed initially under a curfew that inhibited their working hours in the studio, which effectively turned their flat into an extension of the workplace. Most animators with pre-war experience had been called up, so the labour pool was limited. And while cinema advertising got a brief lift due to the lack of column inches in the page-rationed print media, many brands soon disappeared.

On the plus side, however, the Ministry of Information began commissioning a growing number of public information shorts. Its new head of the film division, Jack Beddington, had been one of John and Joy's best clients in his former role as the head of Shell's publicity department. Enemy aliens or not, they made more than 42 shorts for the MOI in four years and, most importantly, were able to continue this relationship with the government in

the post-war period. Animation was felt to be the perfect medium through which to sell the new National Health Service and other schemes to the British public, and Halas and Batchelor were perfectly placed to meet their requirements. Centred on the relentlessly blithe figure of Charley, a series of seven films was released between 1948-49, adding up to more than 70 minutes of Technicolor animation. It allowed the company to solidify and expand on its wartime foundations.

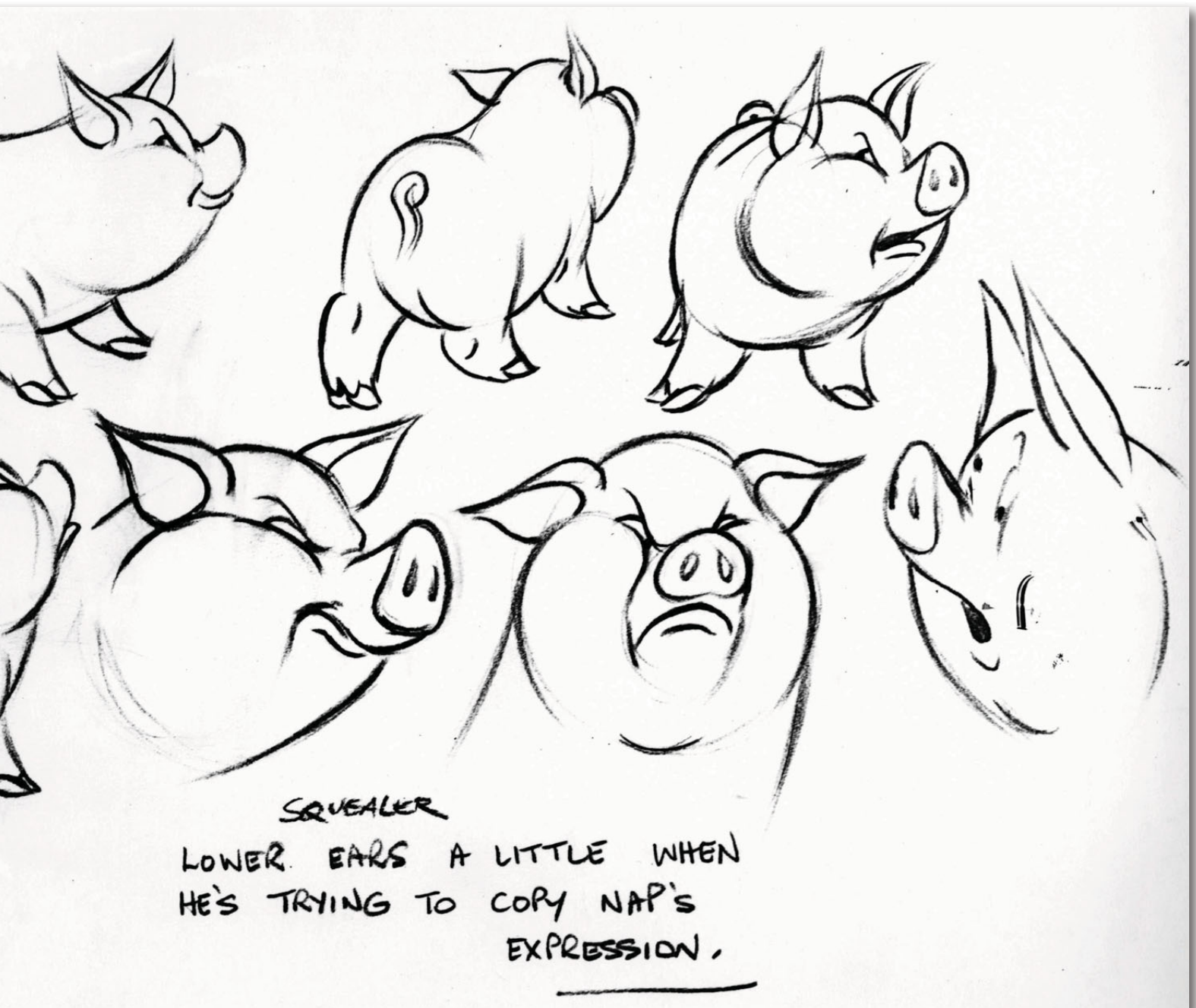
It also gave them security to embark on what the critic Oswald Blakeston described in the summer 1948 issue of *Sight & Sound* as something that "could be the beginning of a new chapter in film cartoon history". Made with the same staff as the Charley series, in full colour and to a similar length, *The Magic Canvas* (1948) was an aspirational, experimental, serious film of a kind the company would arguably not produce again for 30 years. This was not the jaunty, kaleidoscopic revelry of Len Lye's *A Colour Box* (1935), which topped off the abstraction with a commercial ending to buy its way into cinemas. It was more akin to Lye's earlier *Tusalava*, which earned the hearty nods of the London Film Society set when it was first screened in 1929, and then was barely seen again for nearly 40 years.

That is not to suggest that either of these films are failures – quite the opposite – but it was clear that this "new chapter" was not going to pay the bills. Luckily the day job was still going strong, and films such as *Robinson Charley* (1948), which introduced our old friend to the Marshall Plan aid programme in Europe, had been noticed across the Atlantic. This led to a commission to make *The Shoemaker and the Hatter* (1950) for the Economic Cooperation Administration and, perhaps without John and Joy knowing, put them top of a list to produce a feature-length cartoon of George Orwell's novella *Animal Farm*.

The role of the CIA in funding cultural works as part of the Cold War is now well established, and *Animal Farm* (1954) was a key part of that campaign. Whether John and Joy knew of the true source of the funding is unclear, as their direct dealings were with the American producer Louis De Rochemont and his associates. But what is clear is that without this funding Britain would not have produced its first commercially released animated feature film at this time, making it something of a false milestone founded on extraordinary circumstances.




BRING HOME THE BACON Sketches (top) by John Halas and Joy Batchelor (above) for the UK's first commercially released animated feature, *Animal Farm* (right), which was covertly funded by the CIA as part of its struggle for cultural hegemony during the Cold War



BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE © RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (c)

The decade or so that followed *Animal Farm* was something of a golden age for the industry, but it was not founded on the box office, or Blakeston's new chapter of animation as art. Far more critical were commissions from corporations such as BP and ICI, which chose to make glossy self-promotional films rather than hand over their profits to the government at a punitive post-war tax rate. Also more significant was the launch of commercial television in September 1955, which shook up the bigger animation studios and resulted in an atomisation of talent. Figures such as Bob Godfrey (who went on to animate the children's TV shows *Roobarb* and *Henry's Cat*) were able to set up their own boutique studios to cash in on the explosion of work that was required to fill the ad breaks, and it attracted further talent from overseas. George Dunning (*Yellow Submarine*), Richard Williams (*The Thief and the Cobbler*) and Jimmy Murakami (*When the Wind Blows*) all worked at the newly formed TV Cartoons (later TVC London).

In 1957, Halas was able to hold Britain's first animated film festival at the National Film Theatre, 



The financial foundation of the UK's animation industry is still commercial work, alongside the creative but somewhat ghettoised world of pre-school kids' animation

featuring an international programme alongside British commercial and independent work. This was part of a growing appreciation of the artform worldwide, evidenced by the first animation festival at Annecy in 1960 and the start of an international association of animators – ASIFA – in the same year. A series of innovative shorts, such as Bob Godfrey's *Do It Yourself Cartoon Kit* (1959), George Dunning's *The Apple* (1962) and Halas & Batchelor's own *Automania 2000* (1963) – the first British cartoon to get an Oscar nomination – showed British animators at the top of the game.

The problem was that the financial bedrock of the industry was still the sponsored commercial work which, however innovative it might be, was often anonymous and unglamorous. Halas & Batchelor made repeated attempts to break in to television with children's series such as *Foo-foo* (1960), the stop-motion *Snip and Snap* (1960) and *DoDo the Kid from Outer Space* (1965). But, in a familiar turn of events, the competition of cheaply imported cartoon series from the States made the economics impossible. Short films made little or no money on the cinema circuit and the considerable investment required to produce an animated feature was just not available (unless The Beatles decided they wanted cartoon proxies to fulfil their United Artists contract, resulting in 1968's *Yellow Submarine*).

From the late 60s Halas & Batchelor was principally producing animation for hire for Hanna-Barbera and Rankin/Bass on series such as *The Jackson 5ive* (1971-72) and *The Osmonds* (1972-73). This involved slightly more creative input than that enjoyed by the South Korean studios used by the likes of *The Simpsons* today, but it was effectively another form of sponsored production. In 1968 John and Joy sold a part-interest in their company to the broadcaster Tyne Tees, and by 1972 the pair were pushed out of the studio that carried their name. Many would have quit and Batchelor, tired of nearly 40 years in a hostile industry, almost certainly wanted to. Back in 1963 they had set up an offshoot company, Educational Film Centre, to produce audiovisual material for schools, and on its own this would have offered a comfortable semi-retirement. However, Halas – an optimist, politician and businessman as much as an artist – was able to buy back Halas & Batchelor, for less than it had been sold, in 1975.


The remaining years of the company (or companies, as both the EFC and H&B names were used on different projects) are notable for an embrace of Europe over America, with two series based on the works of the German humorist Wilhelm Busch and a 12-minute music promo *Autobahn* (1979) based on the music of Kraftwerk, which was one of their greatest achievements. John was an early advocate of computer animation, resulting in ex-

perimental works such as *Dilemma* (1981) by Computer Creations, with designs by fellow Hungarian János Kass. Even *The Magic Canvas* was given a second life with an 80s soundtrack under the title *Flying Free* (1980).

As Halas & Batchelor was winding down, a new golden age for British animation was starting, founded on the enlightened commissioning and programming policy of Channel 4, following its launch in 1982. There are clear links between the two eras, with TVC London producing *The Snowman* (1982) to kick things off, and Alison De Vere – who had worked as a designer at Halas & Batchelor in the mid-50s – given the opportunity to produce one of animation's true masterpieces, *The Black Dog* (1987). Talents such as Joanna Quinn, Barry Purves, Sarah Ann Kennedy and Jonathan Hodgson were backed to produce provocative, intelligent and often very funny adult animation for television and the festival circuit. British productions dominated the animation awards categories of the 1990s, and there was the true breakthrough of Aardman, with the BBC backing *Wallace and Gromit* and Channel 4 funding *Creature Comforts* (1989).

But this was not the happy ending of John and Joy's dreams of a thriving British animation industry, and was to prove yet another artificial high. The fact remains that the financial foundation of the industry is still commercial work, alongside the often very creative but somewhat ghettoised world of pre-school children's animation. As production funds dried up and broadcast opportunities disappeared, boarding up the shop window for the industry, the number of more aspirational, challenging independent shorts has thinned out.

Such is the situation today. Four of the last five winners of the Best British Short Animation Bafta have been graduation films, formed in a short-lived window of support and resource that professionals have to make great sacrifices to recreate. The industry is capable of producing some extraordinary works, but with no foreseeable means of getting serious revenue from short films on the horizon, the rewards are likely to remain pats on the back rather than pounds in the pocket.

So to bookend the piece, when a largely wound down Halas & Batchelor finally closed its doors after Halas's death in 1995, was the event met with less indifference than its arrival? Yes and no. Fellow animator Frédéric Back, twice an Oscar winner, marked the occasion by drawing a picture of John in the afterlife being recognised and greeted by Leonardo da Vinci. "By God! Leonardo!" says John. "By ASIFA! John!" says Leonardo. *Sight & Sound*, in its annual obituaries feature, did John the honour of listing his name without a reference to remind people who he was. In British animation sometimes you have to be grateful for the small victories. 

ROAD TRIP
One of Halas & Batchelor's greatest achievements was the 12-minute music promo *Autobahn* (above), based on the music of Kraftwerk

BET NATIONAL ARCHIVE (2)

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ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

Tomm Moore's deeply affecting animated fantasy 'Song of the Sea' taps in to the spirit of Studio Ghibli with its family-oriented tale of mythical sea creatures, faerie folk and a family in crisis – and, in the process, seeks to reclaim Irish folklore from the realms of tourist-tat leprechauniana

By Trevor Johnston



If you set out to assess the global state of play for feature animation, you might come up with three creative hot spots. The US west coast, home to the likes of Pixar, Disney and DreamWorks, is an obvious industry leader, and Japan serves an eager domestic market, while its Studio Ghibli operation is revered at home and abroad. There's also, however, a more recent beacon of enterprise in Ireland, where Kilkenny-based outfit Cartoon Saloon has turned out two highly distinctive, lovingly crafted features in the past six years, both of which have been Oscar-nominated – *The Secret of Kells* and *Song of the Sea*. Indeed, the latter, a gorgeous and affecting tale of mythical sea creatures, faerie folk and a family in crisis, recently achieved a major coup at the Irish Film and Television Awards by triumphing over fierce competition – including Gerard Barrett's *Glassland* and Lenny Abrahamson's *Frank* – to take home the Best Film gong, an extremely rare instance of an animated feature vanquishing its live-action rivals. "Normally you go to these bashes and it's like you're sitting at the kiddies' table," reflects Tomm Moore, Cartoon Saloon's co-founder, and the co-writer and director of *Song*. "I didn't even bother preparing a speech, so it all came as a bit of a shock, especially in such a strong year for Irish film."

That said, he's still very much in favour of the Academy Awards system of a separate category for animation ("otherwise we'd never get any recognition"), a validation of the notion that "animation is a medium and not a genre, so you can go absolutely anywhere with it". And he knows whereof he speaks. Back in 2009, Moore and Cartoon Saloon announced their international arrival by taking animation to a place where few anticipated it might go. *The Secret of Kells* was a family-oriented animated feature about Irish monks protecting a treasured medieval manuscript from the threat of invading Norsemen. A tribute to one of Ireland's greatest cultural treasures, the Book of Kells, its distinctive visual style deliberately suggested the flattened perspectives and two-dimensionality of illuminated manuscripts and stained-glass windows – all the while delivering a child-friendly adventure with forest sprites, a plucky junior protagonist and scary cave-dwelling beasties. After years of toil involving a fan-tail of European co-production partners, suddenly Moore found himself fêted by the Pixar animators he'd long admired, and basking in the affirmation of an Oscar nod.

Delightful as *The Secret of Kells* is, Moore's *Song of the Sea* marks an advance in pretty much every respect. It puts younger viewers right at the heart of a story that's driven by the threatened disintegration of a modern family. Think Bambi had it bad? Poor Ben loses his mum when she's bringing his sister Saoirse into this world, his lighthouse-keeper dad struggles to cope so Granny threat-

ens to march the two kids off to Dublin, and all the while it's increasingly evident that Saoirse shares her mother's lineage from the selkies – sea sprites gifted with a magical song, yet also threatened by a fearsome witch bent on turning Ireland's few remaining faerie folk to stone. Laid out in an even more sophisticated palette, playing softer watercolour textures against the clean, lucid lines of the character design, Moore's fascination with Irish folklore here takes on a new emotional heft. The film deftly threads relatable contemporary characters into a narrative founded on the primal templates of ancient sea stories, their metaphors for loss and perseverance still sharply relevant for a fractured household trying to self-heal. The result kept the six-year-old at the screening I attended absolutely transfixed throughout, had your correspondent mopping up the tears by its close, and represents a combination of storytelling integrity and visual craftsmanship that make it one of the rare recent animated features that's definitely in the Studio Ghibli class.

There's a little chuckle from Mr Moore over the Skype connection to his Kilkenny office when I tell him I cried both times I watched *Song of the Sea*, a project he says was inspired by the cross-generational appeal of Miyazaki's *My Neighbour Totoro*, lingering memories of 1992's Irish childhood fable *Into the West*, and a holiday encounter with sundry dead seals on a Cork beach. "The owner of the cottage we were renting told us the fishermen had killed them out of frustration with the way the industry was going," the amiable 38-year-old says. "But she also said that was something which would never have happened in the old days because people then had more of a connection with the environment. Thinking about that led me to a book called *The People of the Sea*, about the whole array of selkie legends. All that folklore's packed with symbolism if you read through Joseph Campbell, and the sea itself obviously has a profound resonance in terms of psychology. You travel



SPIRITED AWAY
Song of the Sea (above, left) was inspired by the cross-generational appeal of Miyazaki's *My Neighbour Totoro* as well as lingering memories of 1992's Irish childhood fable *Into the West*





Is there such a category as 'family arthouse'? I worry that we're seen as somehow worthy and improving, like the cinema equivalent of broccoli

➡ westwards in Ireland, as the kids did in *Into the West* and you feel like you're approaching the edge of something. That huge expanse of the Atlantic before you, it's an obvious metaphor for passing over."

As he's talking, I hear the faint scrape of pen on paper and, with the video link switched off, I make a guess that he's getting on with an animator's working day. With the Nickelodeon kids' TV series *Puffin Rock* already keeping the company ticking over, next up for Cartoon Saloon is *The Bread Winner*, a story set in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan from his *Kells* co-director Nora Twomey, for which he's contributing design and storyboard ideas. Such daring subject matter is evidence of their operation's outward-seeking vision, yet what's creatively striking about *Kells* and even stronger in *Song* is the forthright reclamation of Irish folklore from the realms of tourist-tat leprechauniana. With its W.B. Yeats quotations and its cast of faeries, witches and giants ready to drop in the odd line of untranslated Gaelic, there's certainly an element of cultural pride at work – though Moore points out that he came to it through a slightly circuitous cinematic route.

"I was always really impressed by the way Studio Ghibli could take the spirit of Japanese animism and thread that into modern stories, so I was looking for an opportunity to do that in an Irish context. I grew up in an atmosphere where anything Gaelic was deemed old-fashioned and boring, almost like you were ashamed of it, but so much has changed. It's a different society now."



THE HOLY BOOK
Tomm Moore (above) co-directed the Oscar-nominated *The Secret of Kells* (left) with Nora Twomey, a family-oriented tale about a group of monks protecting a manuscript from invading Norsemen

Given the economic demise of the Celtic Tiger, and the evident decline in the power of the Catholic Church, is modern Ireland now looking for a new self-image and is its own pre-Christian culture a part of that equation?

"The country is wondering how to define itself, but I don't see that looking backwards will be part of that process. I see my son, who's been right the way through the Irish-speaking schools programme, and while obviously aware of the richness of the folklore, he's a completely modern individual with far broader horizons than I had growing up. That's the generation I'm making films for, the ones who can consume this stuff alongside Japanese anime and Hollywood animation and not see it as somehow second-best. The sort of myths and legends which were attractive to Yeats can't just be left to fossilise – they have to be reappropriated and remade for today."

All of which offers some hint of the seriousness with which Moore takes his craft, though not to the extent that it neglects the fun factor, since he was at great pains to fill *Song* with enough japes and scrapes to engage junior viewers unconcerned with such cultural-ambassador stuff. As such, he'd road-test sequences at the local primary school where his wife teaches, aware that the same kids might not necessarily get exposed to the finished film given the realities of distribution, which have thus far consigned his output to arthouse status. "It's frustrating," he admits, "having this two-tier system which meant *Kells* didn't get into the multiplexes. Element Distribution and StudioCanal in the UK are trying to broaden it out for the new one, but is there such a category as 'family arthouse'? I worry that we're seen as somehow worthy and improving, like the cinema equivalent of broccoli, but you hope somehow that eventually quality will out and the audience responds to it."

That said, he's not about to jump ship and head for Hollywood any time soon. "The films have had a great response over there, and I've really been fêted by the likes of Pete Docter and John Lasseter, who've sort of taken me under their wing. To be honest, they're jealous of the independence in the way I work, because they're under such pressure to recoup the huge costs of the way they make films. What I get from them is a sense that the Oscar nominations are not a call for me to go over to America, but an encouragement to stay at home and keep doing what I'm doing. They say, 'You get to make your own movies, you're living the dream.'"

That dream admittedly includes meeting his hero Miyazaki at a pre-Oscars do, where he pretended he was a smoker to join the great man in the roped-off cancer-stick section. "He laughed because I was spluttering so much, and pushed his ashtray towards me," Moore says. "That was my magic Miyazaki moment."

A suitable exit line, but when I make my apologies for intruding on his working day, he switches on the Skype camera and shows me his handiwork, a splendid line drawing of a wolf surrounded by a halo of forest foliage.

"We're already doing advanced prep on my next film, *The Wolf Walkers*, about Cromwell in Ireland during the 1650s, Puritans versus ancient pagan beliefs. Bit of a challenge for the family audience though, so we're wondering how dark we can go. The current betting is *Batman: The Animated Series* meets *Bambi*..."



Song of the Sea is released in UK cinemas on 10 July and is reviewed on page 86

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BLACK LIKE US

Justin Simien's *'Dear White People'*, a droll comedy following four black students negotiating a complex web of identity politics at an Ivy League university, joins a slim yet distinct tradition of black American satirical films that raise important questions about race and racism

By Ashley Clark

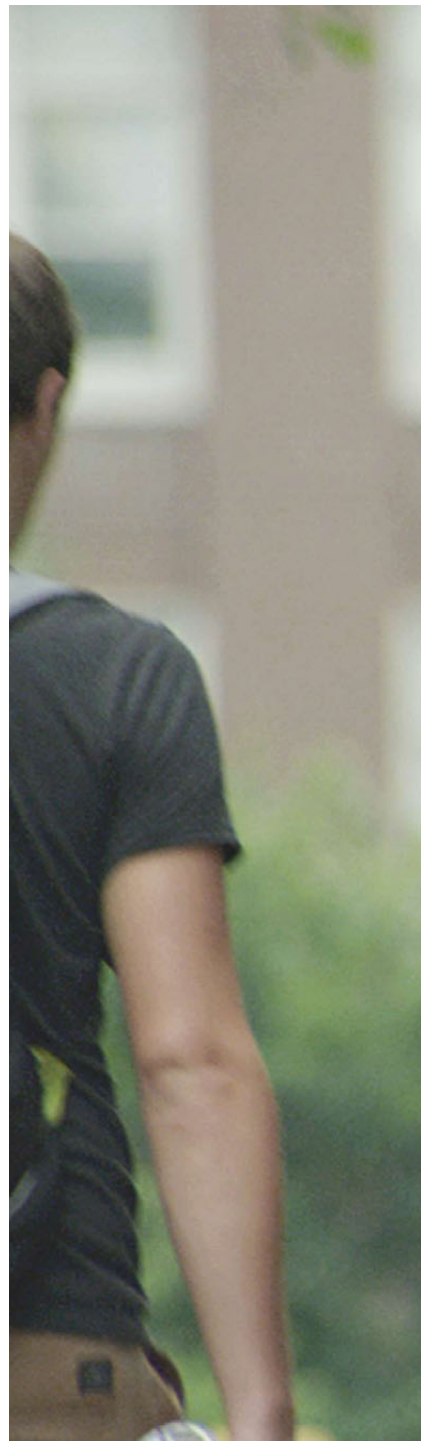
On the same day I began work on this article, news broke in America of a race-themed incident so bizarre that it seemed to transcend the realm of satire. The parents of Rachel Dolezal, president of the Spokane, Washington, chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), came forward to announce that their daughter was, in fact, white and had been posing as black for a number of years. Footage quickly surfaced of an excruciating interview in which Dolezal was asked by a reporter whether she was African-American – “I don’t understand the question,” she stammered, after prolonged hesitation. In the hours and days following the news, websites and social media lit up with opinion ranging from condemnation and mockery of Dolezal’s appropriation of black culture, to grudging support and outright bafflement. Yet it was *The New Yorker’s* Jelani Cobb, speaking about the concept of ‘race’ as a social construct, who put it best: “In truth, Dolezal has been dressed precisely as we all are, in a fictive garb of race whose determinations are as arbitrary as they are damaging. This doesn’t mean that Dolezal wasn’t lying about who she is. It means that she was lying about a lie.”

This concept of “lying about a lie” is central to writer-director Justin Simien’s debut feature *Dear White People*, a droll ensemble comedy set inside a fictional Ivy League university. It tracks four black students as they navigate a complex web of identity politics and personal issues, and culminates with a horrifyingly offensive ‘blackface’ party, apparently organised by a white fraternity. The colossal fib underpinning Simien’s film is that America has triumphantly overcome its past struggles to become a ‘post-racial’ nation, an idea that became particularly popular following the election of Barack Obama in 2008. “People just forgot that racism existed for a second,” Simien tells me via Skype from Los Angeles, his voice laced with dry humour. “There was this moment in the

country where you seemed like you were crying wolf if you complained about racism in any form because, like, ‘Hello! You have a black president. Oprah’s the richest woman ever, and there’s Beyoncé! What do you have to complain about?’”

Recent shocking events in America – from the killings of black people like Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Renisha McBride and Tamir Rice among others, to the racist massacre at a black Charleston church – constitute only the most obvious rebuttals to the pernicious ‘post-racial’ narrative. Simien’s focus, however, is less on such explosive examples of anti-black racism, and more on its insidious manifestations, from daily micro-aggressions to structural inequality and institutionally embedded white privilege. In *Dear White People*, we see the former in the experience of mild-mannered Lionel (Tyler James Williams), who is tired of white people picking at his majestic Afro but powerless to stop them without causing an awkward scene; and the latter in the case of the black dean (Dennis Haysbert), who is more qualified than his white peer and rival – the intellectually mediocre president (Peter Sarsgaard) – yet must settle for the lesser role.

Dear White People is notable for its wry, sardonic presentation of tricky material. Its title, for example, derives from the arch radio broadcasts delivered by radical student filmmaker Sam (Tessa Thompson): they begin with piquant admonitions such as, “Dear white people, the minimum number of black friends needed to not seem racist has just been raised to two.” Simien’s tonal strategy is well-considered. “Satire is particularly powerful because it tricks you into laughing at the thing that otherwise you wouldn’t even look at before – and you have to deal with it,” he says. The laughs, however, stop sharply during the end credits, into which Simien splices a series of chilling photographs of genuine recent blackface-themed parties at US colleges.



IDENTITY POLITICS
Justin Simien's *Dear White People* (above) owes a clear debt to *Bamboozled* (2000, far right), a media satire from Spike Lee that offers a discourse on 'blackness', asking what it means and who can claim it, themes the director first touched on in *School Daze* (right, 1988)



As a powerful rhetorical technique, this brusque intrusion of reality upon a fictional landscape recalls the end of Spike Lee's acrid *Bamboozled* (2000), in which the conclusion of the narrative is followed by a five-minute montage depicting Hollywood's most offensive historical stereotypes of black people. *Bamboozled* is a clear influence on *Dear White People*, and – although it was critically mauled and performed poorly at the box office – is arguably the central work in a slim yet distinct body of black American cinema that deploys satirical methods (absurdity, irony, sarcasm, dark humour) to pose tricky questions about race without delivering obvious answers.

Bamboozled was inspired by media satires such as Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) and Sidney Lumet's *Network* (1976), as well as Lee's own student short *The Answer* (1980), in which a black screenwriter accepts a bumper fee to pen a remake of D.W. Griffith's racist epic *The Birth of a Nation*. It stars Damon Wayans as Pierre Delacroix, a Harvard-educated black TV executive who is chronically frustrated by the lack of opportunities he is afforded by his vulgar wannabe-black boss Dunwitty (Michael Rapaport) to create shows for middle-class African-Americans. Delacroix thus proposes the most offensive idea he can conjure – a modern-day blackface minstrel show – in order to expose the racist venality of the network, and ensure he gets himself sacked, along with a tasty severance package, should the show make it to air: how could the American public possibly countenance such an affront to good taste? In a 'Springtime for

Hitler'-style twist, however, 'The New Millennium Minstrel Show' becomes a smash hit with audiences, sending Delacroix into a pit of self-loathing, and the plot into a spiral of macabre, violent melodrama.

Bamboozled is a deliberately excessive, unwieldy and, ultimately, cold work, yet no major American film has so comprehensively explored the lasting, corrosive effects of the racial stereotypes forged in Hollywood's early days and beyond. Often mistaken for a double-barrelled shotgun blast at white racism, *Bamboozled* in fact draws its visceral power from the range and breadth of its rage: Lee, operating in an unprecedentedly crotchety register, doesn't let anybody off the hook. He chides gangsta rappers and contemporary black audiences for their collusion in the replication of stereotypes; criticises black performers for allowing themselves to be "cooned"; and arguably even implicates himself. It's hard to see the film's jabs at rampant commercialism ('Timmi Hillnigger' clothes marketed aggressively at black youth) and not consider Lee's own pivotal involvement in making Nike trainers such a hot property through a series of ubiquitous commercials in the 80s and 90s. *Bamboozled*'s combination of fearless provocation, wit and ire was a key influence on boundary-pushing black American humour in the coming decades, from the TV sketch series *Chappelle's Show* (which featured a character named Clayton Bigsby, a blind, black white supremacist), to Aaron McGruder's animated series *The Boondocks*, and the comedy of Key & Peele and Larry Wilmore.

Bamboozled's human core is provided by Manray and

BITTER LAUGHTER

Drop Squad (1994, right) and (below, from top left) *Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood* (1996), *I'm Gonna Get You Sucka* (1988), *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973) and *Watermelon Man* (1970)



RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (G) KOBAL COLLECTION (G)

Womack, the impoverished, talented and hopelessly circumscribed black entertainers drawn into Delacroix's sticky web: they can't get work anywhere else. In this respect Lee's film echoes Robert Townsend's scalpel-sharp but infinitely more good-natured *Hollywood Shuffle* (1987), in which the director also stars as a jobbing black actor forced to repeatedly audition for a narrow range of roles: pimps, hoodlums or slaves. Amid the smart comedy, Townsend proffers a moment of horror: a scene in which white movie execs repeatedly demand an "Eddie Murphy type", while the camera pans across a row of bare-necked, leather-jacketed black actors (some of the lighter-skinned actors are blacked up) giving it their best Murphy-style shit-eating cackle. The message is clear in this pre-Denzel, Wesley and Will Smith age: if you don't want to play a slave, then mimic the one guy who made it.


Through Delacroix, *Bamboozled* also facilitates a valuable discourse on 'blackness' that's hyper-relevant in the Dolezal age: what does it mean, and who can claim it? With his Ivy League pedigree, made-up name and preposterously affected accent, Delacroix clearly orbits outside traditional realms of onscreen black identity, yet Lee refrains from presenting him as a straightforward 'Uncle Tom' caricature. One of the film's funniest scenes depicts a Delacroix daydream in which he boxes the oafish Dunwitty about the ears as punishment for his egregious disrespect ("If the truth be told, I probably know niggers better than you," says Dunwitty). Questions surrounding authentic blackness are common in Lee's work, like his college satire *School Daze* (1988), and they surface again in the bombastic *Drop Squad* (1994), which he executive produced. *Drop Squad* follows a group of violent black neo-revolutionaries who kidnap and deprogramme black people whom they consider sellouts – one such 'sellout', a cynical ad man played by Eriq La Salle, is an obvious precursor to Delacroix. Much subtler, yet on a similar theme, is Michael Schultz's perceptive comedy *Living Large* (1991), about an aspiring black TV anchorman who wonders whether becoming successful also means becoming white. The oddball, outsider black figure can also be found in Wendell B. Harris's disturbing *Chameleon Street* (1989), which is based on the true-life tale of a Chicago career impostor who slipped undetected into a number of roles, from lawyer to gynaecologist.

Bamboozled and *Dear White People* are definitively new millennium texts in the way they deal with the production and effects of new media (dissemination of information on the internet plays a key role in both narratives). Yet tonally they hark back to a gaggle of weird, acidly humorous films that posed thorny questions about race in the turbulent aftermath of the Civil Rights movement, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Robert Kennedy. Though not made by black directors, Robert Downey Sr's *Putney Swope* (1969) and Brian De Palma's *Hi, Mom!* (1969) are worthy of inclusion in this discussion. In the former, the token black man on the executive board of an advertising firm is accidentally put in charge; the latter, meanwhile, digresses from its main narrative to present 'Be Black, Baby!', an extended 'documentary' in which a group of black actors in white-face show an audience of nervy, blacked-up WASPs what it's really like to be black, with disastrous consequences. Hal Ashby's starkly ironic *The Landlord* (1970) – penned



by the great screenwriter, playwright, novelist and director Bill Gunn – presciently critiques white gentrification of urban black areas, and Melvin Van Peebles's *Watermelon Man* (1970) follows a cocky, racist white man who one day awakes to discover – to his horror – that he is black. It ambles along with a combination of smart social observation and dubious humour, but ends with a bang. The man, having come to terms with his blackness, is last seen practising martial arts with a group of black militants. Best of all is Ivan Dixon's jaw-dropping *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973), in which a black man recruited by the CIA as a pen-pusher proceeds to learn (and then forcefully apply) the techniques of urban guerrilla warfare on the streets of Chicago.

No discussion of black film satire would be complete without mention of the self-reflexive parodies in which black filmmakers comment ironically on stereotyped styles and genres with which their contemporaries and forebears have been associated. Trashy blaxploitation tropes are gleefully skewered in Keenen Ivory Wayans's *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka* (1988) and Scott Sanders's *Black Dynamite* (2009); gangsta rap showmanship takes a pounding in Tamra Davis's *CB4* (1993) and Rusty Cundieff's superb *Fear of a Black Hat* (1992); while Paris Barclay's hood movie send-up *Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood* (1996) is almost as good as its title.

While it's a blessed relief that *Dear White People* has secured a UK release, some 17 months after its Sundance bow, few of the other films discussed above are easy to locate today. Perhaps in part because of their critical, anti-establishment approaches and innate awkwardness, they've suffered from shoddy distribution, limited home entertainment releases or, in the case of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, allegedly been actively suppressed by the FBI. Yet they're each worth the effort in tracking down. They all offer distinct, compelling takes on the black American experience, and what's more, the treasure hunt should be sufficiently involving to keep us all busy until the inevitable Rachel Dolezal biopic hits our screens. 



Dear White People is on limited release in selected UK cinemas from 10 July and is reviewed on page 69

In part because of their critical, anti-establishment approaches, these satirical films have suffered from shoddy distribution and limited home entertainment releases



FACING THE MUSIC

In *Eden*, Félix de Givry plays Paul Vallée, a house music DJ whose fleeting successes are followed by a prolonged creative malaise after he fails to develop his musical voice or learn how to operate within the wider industry



STUCK IN THE GROOVE

Mia Hansen-Løve's 'Eden', which charts the highs and lows of a DJ whose obsession with dance music proves his eventual undoing, brings a documentary sensibility and musical sophistication to its exploration of the French club scene over two decades

By Frances Morgan

Music expresses what language cannot, which is why it can often elude all but the most patchy description. This is particularly true of dance music: it is hard to find the right words for a music formulated to move you beyond words. At the start of Mia Hansen-Løve's *Eden*, Paul Vallée (Félix de Givry) gives it a try nonetheless. It's early morning, November 1992, and the rave taking place on an old military vessel is winding down. Paul approaches the DJ, who is packing up his records, and asks him about a track he heard earlier. "It was sort of happy, with a gentle melody," he says. "A kind of whistling... tiny flutes, small sounds..."

The DJ locates a record, puts it on, and the sound of Derrick May's mix of Sueño Latino's 'Sueño Latino' fills the room, then floats out into the soundtrack as it continues over the title sequence in which Paul and his friends begin the shivery, quiet walk back to whichever regional train station took them to this secret location the night before. Each is absorbed in their own thoughts, but it is easy to imagine them being equally absorbed in the ambient house track, with its light-footed flute loop twisting hypnotically over the sustained synth chords and electronic filters that recall early morning birdsong.

This transition from description to diegetic sound to atmospheric soundtrack is the most obvious example of the fluency with which Hansen-Løve directs the music in *Eden*, but she affords it a rare understanding throughout her fourth feature. The film tells the story of Paul, a young Parisian house music fan who becomes a DJ, promoter and producer, following him from 1992 through to 2013 as his fortunes rise and fall along with fashions in dance music. The club scene, used so often in films as a kind of fantasy sequence of abandonment and emotional or sexual connection, is here presented as part of an ongoing existence that we observe, rather than being overwhelmed by. States of euphoria or disorientation might occur for some of the characters sometimes, but are not forced upon the audience with frenetic camerawork or bludgeoning sonics.

"We wanted the music to have a real texture," 

just as it has in life,” says Hansen-Løve, talking to me after *Eden*'s screening at the 2014 BFI London Film Festival. “To be part of the scenes, and not to be from the outside.” The director rejected the tendency to submerge the scene in music for a documentary feel in which the tracks ebb and flow, euphoric crowd sing-alongs often rising up into the sound mix. Dancers and DJs alike are sensitive to room sound, good or bad, and here the audience is made to feel likewise, whether that ‘room’ is a basement dive or a huge outdoor party. “Everything is drowned in music,” Hansen-Løve says of other approaches. “It was the one thing we didn’t want to do. Of course, we wanted to have the emotion, the lyricism, the poetry, but I wanted to find it through realism. And to actually do that in a club scene is tough: if you go into a club and take the sound, it is really terrible. If you do it purely realistically, ultimately you won’t show anything because [the sound is] going to be too dirty. To find the right balance was a real challenge that started from the beginning: that’s something we spent half the time thinking about and working on with the sound editors and recordists.”

Eden combines *vérité* with carefully constructed fiction not only in its sonic aspects. The film shares its name with a 90s fanzine, whose editor lent back issues, flyers and other props; locations of parties are for the most part the ‘real’ venues; and, in a move that adds to the sense of documentary, DJs and artists such as Terry Hunter, Arnold Jarvis, La India and Tony Humphries play themselves in brief cameos. If de Givry seems at home behind the Technics, that’s because he is: the actor is a producer and co-founder of the Montreuil-based Pain Surprises label, one of whose songs is featured on the soundtrack. Hansen-Løve co-wrote the script with her brother, the DJ Sven Hansen-Løve, and many aspects of Paul’s story mirror his experiences in France’s dance scene of the 1990s and early 2000s. During this time Paris became something of an epicentre for homegrown house music, influenced by New York garage and Chicago house as well as the Italo and cosmic disco popular in Europe in the 1980s. The most well-known exports of the so-called French touch scene have been Daft Punk, and the duo have a small but important part in *Eden*'s narrative. Played by Vincent Lacoste and Arnaud Azoulay, they become a comic refrain in the film, the down-to-earth local celebrities who can’t get past the club doorman because no one knows what they look like behind their trademark robot masks. (Hansen-Løve tells me that the real-life duo, Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, also showed practical support by licensing their music to the film for a nominal fee, which encouraged other artists to do the same.)

But their fame is of less interest to Hansen-Løve than the fleeting success and downward trajectory of Paul, whose club nights with his friend Stan, operating under the name Cheers (also the name of Sven’s DJ duo with Greg Gauthier), flourish for a while, in Paris and briefly beyond, to their dream destinations of New York and Chicago. But Paul fails to find a distinctive musical voice or develop any real sense of how to operate in the industry. Early on we sense that his productions are not going to create the kind of buzz felt when Daft Punk’s ‘Da Funk’ is spun at a New Year’s party, ringing in 1995 with a retrofuturistic sound that presages the 21st century.



My films are always about lonely characters who find strength in something that’s invisible – that’s not about money or success, but about some kind of poetic relationship to life

“At some point it got repetitive – as if it’s a music that couldn’t really change,” says Hansen-Løve of the garage music that is Paul’s obsession. For her, it is “this fidelity Paul has to the music which ultimately destroys him. His friends will change music in order to stay alive, but he’ll stay there in his niche. The film is partly about this self-destructive aspect of his passion for this specific music.”

This interpretation, however, belies the subtlety with which Hansen-Løve treats the idea of a fading or obsolescent musical form within her narrative. By including in her film real producers, singers and DJs, all of whom are still active, she instead suggests that it is not the music’s stagnation but Paul’s method of engagement with it that precipitates his eventual demise. As a straight white European man a good few years younger than the artists he worships, his relationship with garage, a music birthed in black and gay clubs in the 1980s, can only be that of an outsider, with no access to the subcultures and communities that keep musical forms alive even when they fall out of fashion. When he can’t use this music as a way of connecting with an audience anymore, he stops connecting with real life, spiralling into debt and heavy drug use.

It is thanks to de Givry’s low-key, natural performance – this is his first major film following a bit part in Olivier Assayas’s *Something in the Air* (2011) – that his realisation of music’s limits is moving, transcending the petulance of the disappointed man who has defined himself almost

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATIAS INDICIGAROPHOTO

solely through his cultural artefacts, as seen in films such as *High Fidelity* (2000) and *Ghost World* (2001). It is also indicative of Hansen-Løve's sympathy with those who follow a dream, even when the outcome is disastrous. It's not hard to see parallels with the character of Grégoire (Louis-Do de Lencquesaing) in *Father of My Children* (2009), a film producer who commits suicide after his company faces a financial crisis. In both films, the director does not shy away from the mundane aspects of creative failure: we see Paul at the bank trying to consolidate debts, as we see Grégoire and his staff fielding increasingly urgent calls from investors and creditors. Filmmaking, like most music, has to happen collectively, and Hansen-Løve makes space for the workplace in her films, be that a producer's office or a bedroom recording studio; in *Eden* the blurring of professional and social relationships that characterise work such as DJing and running parties is well-realised in relaxed, authentic ensemble scenes, which Hansen-Løve tells me were those most often written by her brother. But the allure of the obsessive creative endeavour resonates despite her knowledge of its pitfalls. "It's only when I'm making a film that I feel I'm touching something, getting something crucial about life," she reflects. "And that's very connected to some of the themes of my films. In *Father of My Children* and in this one, this addiction to a vocation that ultimately gives meaning to your life is something I experience every day, so that's one of the reasons why it's so present in this film and in my films in general.

"That's probably the one thing all my films have in common: they are always about lonely characters who find their strength in something that's invisible – that's not about money, not about success, but about an attraction to something, a relationship to life, some kind of poetic relationship."

It strikes me that while Camille, the female protagonist of Hansen-Løve's previous film *Goodbye First Love* (2011), is developing a career as an architect, her actual project, her real obsession, is with romantic love rather than art or work. She reaches a state of autonomy by the end of the film, having figured out how to afford love its rightful place in her life, rather than letting it dominate. At the conclusion of *Eden*, Paul is beginning to get his life back on track, but is still to connect meaningfully with a partner, while his most sympathetic female counterpart, Louise (Pauline Etienne), has long since married, moved away from the city and raised a family. It's notable that many of his male friends are still, with varying degrees of success, pursuing their musical interests.

"I noticed this difference between girls and boys of the same age, but who had very different relationships to the passing of time and building their lives," Hansen-Løve says of friends involved in the dance scene. Yet where her films' subjects are concerned, more generally she does not see a disparity between the ways in which different genders pursue creative ideals: "I don't think that. I myself am a filmmaker and I'm very happy about my life as an artist. It's not because it's a man or a woman, it's because it's a person I like and who moves me."

Nevertheless, in *Eden*'s final club scene – a night at Silencio in which Paul reconnects with old friends – the new order of things is demonstrated not only by the fact that the DJ now uses a MacBook, but also that she is a self-assured young woman. It is at moments like these

PARADISE GARAGE
Mia Hansen-Løve (left) co-wrote *Eden* with her DJ brother, who drew on his memories of the Paris dance scene. Below, Daft Punk (played by Arnaud Azoulay and Vincent Lacoste). Bottom, Paul and his friend Louise (Félix de Givry and Pauline Etienne)

that the sprawling chronology of *Eden*, which can at times leave its structure feeling arrhythmic, makes most sense. Using a 21-year timespan is not a formally elegant decision, but it is an emotionally honest one, allowing for portrayals of changing friendships that explore not only the impact of loss but also its long aftermath.

"I didn't want the film to be stuck in the past," says Hansen-Løve. "I could have finished it in 2001, when [Paul] was a huge success, but the whole point was to bring it to the present; that's ultimately what gives meaning to the whole thing."

The film's two decades also speak of Hansen-Løve and her brother's desire to address their experience of club culture as a historical narrative. This tendency has been underway in journalism and academia for some time, but rarely on film, and even less so in fictional film. "I realised nobody had really taken it seriously and made a story out of it, or even looked at it realistically. People used it here and there, the music, the fantasy about it. But [I wanted] to look at it as being part of life, and part of people's real lives, not just the moment."

Her film emerges from these desires as a kind of melancholy ethnomusicology, sometimes as hard to define as the music that inspired it, but striving for its affect nonetheless. **S**

i *Eden* is released in UK cinemas on 24 July and is reviewed on page 70. A look at the cinema of Daft Punk will be published at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound



FAREWELL, LEICESTER SQUARE

New cinemas, mostly of the swish, upmarket and upgraded variety, began to appear across London a few years back and in the last 18 months this trend has accelerated to such an extent that a new standard of comfort and immersion has become the norm. That cinemas need to fight harder for our attention in the hand-held screen age is clear, but is this enriched yet often expensive experience the way to go? After all, there are other approaches than the 'best of everything' model. Below are reports on five new London cinemas, which set out to unpick the issues behind this welcome building boom. **By Edward Lawrenson**

PICTUREHOUSE CENTRAL

It's a week before the official launch of Picturehouse Central, and I'm being shown around this West End venue by Toby King, marketing manager of Picturehouse Group. The cinema is the result of a little over a year's building work, and the space bristles with activity: a workman is attaching things to the wall, another is inspecting a tangle of under-floor wires, new staff members are acquainting themselves with the freshly stocked ground floor café, and in the main theatre technicians are scrutinising a colour bar projected on to the large screen.

But, these final touches aside, the cinema feels ready. Based in the Trocadero, a sprawling Victorian-era entertainment complex next to Piccadilly Circus, Picturehouse Central occupies the site of what was, until spring 2014, a Cineworld cinema. One of the UK's leading multiplex chains, Cineworld bought Picturehouse in 2012, a deal that prompted some concern over the continued commitment by the smaller company, owner of the Ritzy in Brixton and the Clapham Picturehouse among other venues, to independent and arthouse cinema. So whatever else it represents, this major refurbishment is a strong affirmation of the Picturehouse brand. The old Cineworld interiors have been completely transformed: exposed brickwork, playful murals and period details from the building's Victorian era replace the former cinema's bland corporate atmosphere. "It feels like a Picturehouse," King says as he guides me from the new open-plan foyer to the first floor restaurant and bar area. "We're not coddling people about. It's everything that

multiplexes are not. It has a neighbourhood feel but it happens to be in central London."

While the interior lacks the bold impact of the new Curzon Bloomsbury (see page 44), a mile or so to the east at the site of the old Renoir Cinema, the redesign by Panter Hudspith architects is certainly inviting. Where the Picturehouse Central really impresses is in the way the old seven screens have been transformed. The screen size, for instance, in the 341-seat Screen 1 is commanding and the sightlines clean and direct; a similar level of attention has been applied to the smaller screens. "We've got slightly less seating because we're giving more leg-room," Clare Binns, director of programming and acquisitions, tells me of the approach to converting the original theatres. "The actual screen size is also bigger." Screen 1 is equipped to play Dolby Atmos, as with the Curzon Bloomsbury, and boasts a 4K projector, but it also includes a 70mm and 35mm facility (the latter also shared by Screen 7, the smallest in the venue, presumably to show archive and celluloid prints of arthouse films).



Picturehouse Central

With these seven screens of varying capacities, Picturehouse Central offers a degree of flexibility that is key to programming today. It's a principle that also underlined the thinking behind Curzon Bloomsbury's redesign. But where that cinema is, broadly speaking, dedicated to world cinema, Picturehouse Central will feature a more general mix. "I always say that we want to try and show the best of everything," Binns says. "If you were to ask a distributor [about us], they might say, slightly tongue-in-cheek, that we cherry-pick. Essentially it's the best of blockbusters, the best of crossovers, the best of documentaries, the best of foreign-language, the best of independent American. Given we've got seven screens, we're lucky in that we will be able to have a great mix so that if you want to go and see *Inside Out* you can, but if you want to see Sorrentino's *Youth* you can see that too." With the cinema opening in a week's time, she tells me it will be showing *Jurassic World* and *The Salt of the Earth* and "everything in between".

One of the challenges facing all the cinemas discussed in this piece is the increasing popularity of digital platforms to view content. And in their various ways these new venues have responded to this existential threat by embracing the uniquely shared and immersive qualities of cinematic exhibition. "I want something that makes me feel like I'm in a cinema, that I'm in a building that cares about film," Binns says. "There are lots of choices now in terms of how you spend your money and how you see content. So we have to provide something that is absolutely customer friendly."

Binns's enthusiasm sounds genuine, and I only partly deflate it when I raise



THEATRELAND
HAFTESBURY
ENUE W1
OF WESTMINSTER

PICTUREHOUSE
CENTRAL

CINEMA

USE
AL

the ticket price. Peak admission is £18 and on the day I talk to Binns I note some mild squalls of protest on social media. But that headline figure doesn't tell the whole story, with a range of off-peak and membership options also available. It's also clear that considerable funds have been ploughed into the venue. Binns won't be drawn to give a specific figure for the refurbishment, saying only that the cost was in the millions. But she underlines the scale of the investment when she corrects me on terminology: "It's not a refurbishment, it's a transformation."

CLOSE-UP

When I spoke to Damien Sanville outside Close-Up, the East London film centre of which he is director, our conversation was interrupted by the clatter of building work. Close-Up is in the final stages of a move into new premises, a two-storey site on Sclater Street, off Brick Lane, that includes a new cinema (opening this month), café and vast library of arthouse DVDs and cinema books. The cinema space was still under construction when I visited in mid-June, but an air of purposeful calm hung over the venue. The source of the racket actually came from next door: workmen were taking down scaffolding surrounding the adjoining building.

This building work is evidence of the gentrification that has marked this area over the past ten years. The office block on the other side of Close-Up, for instance, has recently been converted into flats. With the weary incredulity that marks so many Londoners' conversations about property, Sanville tells me that two-bedroom apartments there are going for around the £1 million mark.

The cost of property, which affects the sustainability of cultural enterprises like Close-Up (and saw rent rise to challenging levels in the property Sanville had previously occupied) is partly driven by the proximity of 'Silicon Roundabout', the network of tech start-ups clustered around Old Street tube station. The digital economy affected Close-Up in other, equally profound ways. One of London's leading independent DVD libraries, housing thousands of arthouse and specialist titles, Close-Up saw its customer base drop dramatically with the introduction of video-on-demand and streaming platforms. While all the London cinemas discussed here are contending in their own ways with sky-high property prices and new home-entertainment technologies, these twin pressures converged on Close-Up with especial starkness. Six months after the launch of Netflix, Sanville recalls, his "business was falling apart".

There is a bracing note of defiance then to Sanville's decision not just to carry on but to expand the business to open a 40-seat, 35mm-equipped screening-room and establish "an old-fashioned repertory cinema". Close-Up is run as an independent business, funded from private sources. "We're paying a very high price to be independent: we don't have to tick any boxes or do XYZ in relation to programming agendas. We just literally show the films we want to show," he says of his decision not to pursue public subsidy. Admission is £10, with a 20 per



The defiant ones: Close-Up in East London houses a cinema and a vast library of film books and DVDs

cent reduction to those paying the annual £40 membership (which also allows you to borrow the DVDs and books for free); Sanville also plans to raise revenue through private hire, making the cinema available to nearby creative firms.

Sanville is clear that the cinema would not exist were it not for the affordable rent and long-term lease provided by his Sclater Street landlady, Gwendolyn Leick. Such patronage is rare if not exceptional, especially in London. Still, Close-Up has to operate in the same unsparing circumstances as any other small cultural organisation today. Alive to the risks ahead, Sanville nonetheless makes a sound case for the viability of his business, pointing to a model for how independent, progressive exhibition spaces like Close-Up might adapt to and survive in a digital era.

Originally intending to use the site to stock his catalogue of more than 19,000 DVDs, Sanville decided to open a cinema when studio space in the adjoining building became available. The projection booth was nearly complete when I visited, and pride of place was given to two Kinoton 35mm projectors, wrapped in dust-proof plastic, next to a 2K digital cinema projector. (Purchased at a fraction of their original cost, this pair of almost new projectors was originally owned by a major exhibitor that converted to digital).

Sanville is clearly a celluloid enthusiast on aesthetic grounds, but a marketing logic underlines his advocacy of the medium. "It's very important as a selling point," he says of the 35mm screenings. "With the internet, with DVDs, with proper home cinemas, it's going to be harder to convince people to come to the cinema

A lot of younger people think everything is available on the internet, but 95 per cent is not. It's a complete myth

to see a digital print when they have exactly the same quality as at home. So showing film on film is unique. It's becoming quite standard to say you're projecting on 35mm: it's a completely different experience and everyone knows it."

It also provides the cinema with access to a far bigger range of non-digitised archives. Building on the relationships he forged with distributors and exhibitors when Close-Up hosted film screenings in Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, Sanville's core programme "will be filmmakers like Fassbinder, Tarkovsky, Godard, all the greats, on a regular basis, plus lesser-known directors, film movements and, obviously, experimental cinema."

It's the kind of classic repertory line-up many London cinemas were offering two decades ago, but which has now fallen out of fashion. Sceptical about event-based pop-up cinemas, which have proved popular in recent years, Sanville enthuses about the recent opening of Regent Street Cinema, another purpose-built venue dedicated to repertory (see page 46), and he suggests this type of curator-driven exhibition model meets a need ill-served by the internet. "A lot of younger people think everything is available on the internet. My response to that is: everything you know about is available on the internet, but 95 per cent is not. It's a complete myth." As an example, he cites a plan in August to show Eli Lotar's 1945 documentary *Aubervilliers*, for which there is no digital screening copy: "So we're showing it on 35mm and it'll be extraordinary."

The cinema launches with the aptly titled *Opening Night*, ushering in a short John Cassavetes season. "It's an obvious choice in terms of Cassavetes being such a maverick, independent director who struggled. There is a distant identification in terms of our being independent and going through hurdles to raise money and to find ways to put something together," Sanville explains when asked why he went for this director. Then, with the fervour of fan, he adds: "And because it's John Cassavetes".

DEPTFORD CINEMA

It's a sunny afternoon in early May, and I'm sitting in the auditorium of Deptford Cinema in south-east London. Like so much of the venue, this basement space is a makeshift affair. The walls are unplastered breeze blocks, the floor dusty and uncarpeted, and the screen a modest-looking white board. A dozen or so people are seated in the room, which has a capacity of around 40, and the subject under discussion is the purchase of an A3 printer.

Deptford Cinema is a proudly volunteer-run venture and this brief conference is an example of the larger ethos behind the project. The cinema, which opened at the start of this year, hosts meetings every Sunday, at which anyone is welcome to discuss and decide on matters affecting the venue. These range from small operational concerns, such as the merits of owning a printer, to longer-term capital investments. Converted from a retail space on Deptford Broadway, the cinema is still a work in progress: the licensed café bar is a fridge hedged in by a few crates, and the muted shop-front exterior lacks the marquee draw of most cinemas. Still, what's been done in the past few months has been transformative: the floor of the auditorium is now raked and the ceiling raised to ensure a good throw on the screen from the projector. These substantial alterations are the result of meetings like the one I'm sitting in on, a decision-making process that applies to programming too. Toward the end of the meeting one volunteer chalks out a timetable for the next few months, and invites ideas for film titles to fill the screening slots. As someone with a limited involvement with programme planning in larger, more conventionally structured organisations, I approached Deptford Cinema's open-access philosophy with some scepticism. Film curating can work well as a collaborative practice, but there's equally a risk of impasse with committee-driven decision-making.

"There's this idea about volunteer, open-access organisations that it's people endlessly sticking their hand up and no decision getting made," Edwin Mingard, one of the founders of Deptford Cinema, tells me. "Actually, it's really easy to get decisions made."

Mingard might have been with the project since the beginning, but if this involvement qualified him to set the agenda at the meeting that Sunday he did so discreetly, with an eye to encouraging contributions from newcomers. Members of the weekly meeting tend to form subgroups, one of which is responsible for programming. "I'm really proud of our collective programming," Mingard explains. "To see people – including those who programme festivals or work with prestigious film organisations – sit with people who've never programmed a film before and just say, 'OK, what's the point of the programme – how far could we push this?' is just really exciting."

The atmosphere at the meeting I attended was lively, free-flowing and noisy, but while the impression it created pointed towards chaos, it did achieve results: the chalkboard filled with suggested titles, with accompanying allocated action points inputted into a spreadsheet that Mingard had projected on the screen.

The role of the cinema in offering a shared experience is at the heart of this enterprise. Deptford Cinema can't offer the latest immersive screen technologies, such as Dolby Atmos and 3D, showcased by some other cinemas in this piece. "I think we'll be providing a high-quality experience," Mingard says of the plans to develop the cinema (including facilities to project from DCP and 16mm prints). But he's most enthused about film's status as a social medium.

Social inclusiveness and improved cultural access are the driving motivations: "There are very few social spaces in London where you can go and talk to people you don't already know. A cinema has the ability to break down all these barriers because it's not an arts organisation, it's not a white-gallery kind of space; it sells tickets and if you can buy a ticket you're welcome, and if you can't buy a ticket we'll find a way for you to see the film. It's a nice way of creating a community and getting people from diverse communities to interact in the same space."

Acknowledging the rising costs of cinema-going in the capital – Mingard plausibly reckons a family of four would be lucky to get much change from £100 for a Friday-night visit to the cinema in Soho, once travel is included – Deptford Cinema caps ticket prices at £5. It's a further signal of the cinema's commitment to the local community: Lewisham contains areas of pressing deprivation, and before the arrival of Deptford Cinema the borough lacked even a multiplex. But the low price is also an incentive for the audience to take a chance. "If you walk past the cinema on your way home and there's a film showing, who knows what it is, it's only a fiver, it's £3.50, it's not a big risk, maybe you could just go," Mingard says. "That's what access to art is about. It's about having regular contact, it being part of your life."

On the basis of the programme so far, the cinema is doing a decent job of meeting this aspiration. The week I visited, the cinema was nearing the end of its New Worlds season,

featuring movies about the experiences of under-25s (part of Cinemania, a capital-wide programme supported by Film London). The films were a judicious mix of reasonably recent critically acclaimed titles (*City of God*, *Elephant*, *No One Knows About Persian Cats*) with more leftfield world cinema titles yet to be released in the UK (such as Chen Zhuo's *Song of Silence* and the Greek film *Wasted Youth*, whose co-director Argyris Papadimitropoulos attended a special Q&A). To this solidly arthouse mix is added a selection of cult titles and work by artist filmmakers.

The plan is for the cinema, which is set up as a community interest company, to be self-supporting, with any profits raised ploughed back into existing running costs, which include paying rights holders for showing films. "We had no public funding and no private funding and no money of our own," Mingard says of the early days of Deptford Cinema (although the cinema's website now advertises for donations).

Given the lack of major public or private funds, Deptford Cinema's dependence on voluntary contributions from the local community makes obvious sense. But there's an added political dimension here. Our discussion takes place a week after the election, with arts organisations braced for cuts promised by the new government. Run on leaner lines than the central London commercial venues discussed elsewhere in this article, Deptford Cinema's volunteer-run ethos offers one model for cultural film exhibition in a period of reduced subsidy. "In the 1990s and at the turn of the millennium, I saw a lot of forward-thinking arts organisations, many of which grew out of squats or grassroots political movements, get public funding," Mingard says. "It meant those organisations could do really great work, but once you take that kind of funding you become reliant on it: maybe it's paid for a big new building so now you have a permanent maintenance cost. And so the moment one government gets kicked out and another



Community service: Deptford Cinema has a capacity of around 40 and is run entirely by volunteers

one comes in, and there's no arts money, all of these great things immediately fold."

If these concerns are especially pronounced in London, with public arts venues struggling against a backdrop of rising property prices, Mingard isn't deterred. "We were really determined to create something sustainable in and of itself that no one could come along and shut down," he explains, "If you could start an organisation like this in the most expensive city in the world in the middle of a recession, then you could do it anywhere."

CURZON BLOOMSBURY

At the opening of the Curzon Bloomsbury cinema this March, Takero Shimazaki, the architect behind the redevelopment of this central London site, cited the influence on his design of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. During his brief presentation, he joked that the reference occasioned some repudiation from the Curzon management paying for the £3 million refurbishment: Tarkovsky's interiors are forbidding, haunted, melancholy sites of disrepair; it's the architecture of anguish, not upscale entertainment experience.

So you have to hand it to Curzon for giving Shimazaki his head to deliver this vision. The *Stalker* influence is tamed, temperature- and humidity-controlled, and now accommodates comfy seating, but it's undeniably still there in Shimazaki's quietly impressive build. This is a darkly immersive space sunk two floors beneath the plaza of London's Brunswick Centre. Its subtly disorientating network of chasm-like corridors leading to screening rooms or bar areas is a warren of jagged edges that feels like a refined version of the brutalist designs of the shopping centre and housing complex above. The one splash of colour is provided by the surprisingly fetching pink concrete walls that line the staircase, but the overall mood is a crepuscular chic of which the Russian maestro may well have approved.

It's a stylishly assertive refit, especially given the attachment that London cinephiles feel towards the building's previous incarnation as the Renoir Cinema. A two-screen cinema run by distributor Artificial Eye and used primarily for its first-run releases, the site came under Curzon's supervision when the company merged with Artificial Eye in 2006. Closed for refurbishment in June 2014, it now features six screens: the Renoir 149-seater; four screens of between 28 and 30 seats; and the independently operated, documentary-only Bertha Dochouse screen. The site's luxuriant atmosphere prompted some waves of (to borrow another Tarkovsky title) nostalgia from a number of the old Renoir audience I spoke to, but I feel the new cinema offers some clear advantages over its earlier, more spartan iteration.

The Renoir screen, for instance, is fitted with a 4K projector and is 3D-ready (although celluloid enthusiasts will be disappointed the Bloomsbury is digital-only). This centrepiece screen is also one of only a handful of central London cinemas with Dolby Atmos and, even while there are few arthouse titles designed and mixed in Atmos, the speaker arrangement offers thunderously good sound. It's a premium experience, and attached to this is a premium price. A peak-time ticket

What should we do? Put on more populist films and reduce the ticket price or remain true to what Bloomsbury should be?

for the Renoir, as with Picturehouse Central, is £18 (although, again like the new Picturehouse venue, off-peak and membership rates are lower). "You're talking about a beautiful, superior-quality experience, and that comes with a higher ticket price," says Kate Gerova, head of operational marketing for Curzon Cinemas. "Bloomsbury is an investment, so obviously the ticket prices reflect the amount of investment in the cinema."

It's a persuasive argument, and her comments are made in the context of the company's avowed commitment to continue programming the challenging fare that helped establish the Renoir Cinema's reputation. "We really want Bloomsbury to remain a home of world cinema, a home of arthouse cinema," Gerova says. "I know these terms feel increasingly unpopular or old-fashioned, and they're not always the most profitable of films. So what should we do? Put on more populist films and get more people in to reduce the ticket price or remain true to what Bloomsbury should be?"

That commitment to director-led, foreign-language titles underlines what is surely a more significant aspect of the refurbishment than its ticketing plan: its transformation from a two-screen cinema to a five-screen one. Put simply, the increase in the number of screens allows the venue's programmers more flexibility. Curzon's 28- or 30-seat theatres are necessarily intimate spaces, but if these screens can't quite deliver the sensory complexity of a bigger space they do allow the Curzon Bloomsbury to offer a diverse line-up. And that diversity is an increasingly key component to exhibiting first-run arthouse titles.

"With more screens you have more choice,"

Ailsa Ferrier, Curzon Bloomsbury's programmer, tells me. "With a single-screen cinema, every week you're make or break because you don't have any control. If you lean towards world cinema you're only as strong as the best film opening that week, and as strong as that film might be, it doesn't necessarily translate to box office." It's a model that allows the cinema to play audience-friendly arthouse titles such as *Force majeure* or *A Pigeon Sat on a Branch Reflecting on Existence* alongside riskier, more abrasive or contemplative fare like the May release of *The Tribe* or the upcoming *The Salt of the Earth* or *The Wonders*.

The increased number of screens also means the programmers can keep films on longer. It's an irony of the era of popular new platforms like video on demand that theatrical exhibition has never been busier, with some weeks seeing around 20 features released. "You try to play a range of the good ones," Gerova says, "but we all know that distributors have different marketing budgets, and films with visibility do better than the films that don't have visibility. So the idea is that those films taking a little bit of time to find their feet can play in those smaller screens and not be taken off after week one because you're trying to fill a 250-seat-capacity screen."

The remark is echoed by Ferrier who tells me that *Wild Tales* is still playing, a good month and a half after its opening. "You can keep films on for a longer time. Cinemas with a smaller number of screens have had to lose films just because they've got other films coming in. We're able to keep those films going; it doesn't have to be a smash-and-grab type attitude."

Two months after opening, Gerova and Ferrier are quietly buoyant about the progress of the site so far. "People are returning," Gerova says of the old Renoir crowd, "but what's interesting for us is we definitely have new audiences, younger audiences." When I probe her further she demurs: "I can't share actual figures, but I can tell you that we're



Variety show: the increased number of screens at Curzon Bloomsbury means films can run for longer

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ETIENNE GUILLEMAN

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Manchester's new £25 million art, theatre and film complex, HOME, with its five cinema screens, shows London is not the only UK city to benefit from the recent surge of openings

By Kevin Sampson

HOME is finally here. After five years in planning and execution, Manchester's brand-spanking new film-art-theatre hub is open. Danny Boyle cut the ribbons on the eve of the spring bank holiday weekend and, after a soft launch of parties, events and special screenings, HOME is officially open to its public – and thriving.

That tag – HOME – is the first of many things the team behind the arts complex have got right. Just as Tony Wilson and his gang did with their FAC signage for Factory Records and the legendary Hacienda nightclub, HOME has already become a statement and an identity in and of itself.

From its earliest conception, HOME was to provide the cultural fulcrum of a major regeneration project of a long-neglected site south of Whitworth Street. The £25 million centre – whose design was led by Ernst ter Horst of Mecanoo International – would eventually replace the beloved Cornerhouse cinema and its neighbour the Library Theatre, so sensitivity, community, warmth and welcome were all keynotes as the building began to rise from the rubble.

The result is pretty special. Statement buildings like this are often described as 'stunning', yet HOME is anything but – though its comparatively squat, sheer glass presence is impressive. Sitting amid other taller buildings, it is the outstanding structure. Although new, it has the feel of a building that has been there all along, witnessing the radical overhaul of a grotty quarter rather than itself being the catalyst for change.

Nevertheless, it feels odd after all these years to alight at Oxford Road and walk right past the front door of the Cornerhouse – for so long Manchester's home of independent cinema. Whitworth Street is decked out with HOME bunting – you cannot miss it as you pass the arches that once led to the Hacienda. The link is fittingly referenced in HOME's address – 2 Tony Wilson Place. In we go, then...

The eye is taken immediately by a sizeable, furious-pink neon sign reading 'Scandinavian Pain'. The ground floor gallery is a riot for the senses and sensibilities. Immediately through the doors is an exhibition by Douglas Coupland, *Slogans for the Twenty-First Century* – 148 shout-out motifs ('Epic Fail', 'Haters Gonna Hate') for our times. There is a display of the naive and strangely moving schoolgirl notebooks of Romanian artist Irina Gheorghe, in which she and her friends observe boys in secret, and 'mark' them. If innocence can have a dark side, this is it. And, in a suitably stark screening



HOME sweet HOME: the state-of-the-art Manchester venue offers terrific value

room, there's Declan Clarke's unsettling secret-agent piece, *The Most Cruel of All Goddesses*. Perhaps surveillance, privacy and identity are linking exhibition themes – or maybe these works are just there because they're good.

The ground floor bar looks convivial and suitably metropolitan – many a beard tipped with craft ale foam. But I take the solid concrete steps – everything in HOME is blond wood and raw concrete – to the pretty great first floor café. Some of the tables are a little close to the stairs, giving the impression of being outside the room – in as much as there is a room. It's a space – but it works. Loads of staff; a good, inexpensive menu; a fine list of beverages and wines. I have a goat's cheese and roasted pepper pizza, slugged down with a gutsy Pinot, and listen in as a gay couple

It says something for HOME's programme and the local cineaste community that 'Timbuktu' is sold out



One of HOME's five screens

argue whether it's morally acceptable to take their baby to see a film about Cannon Films.

HOME's film programme is curated by Jason Wood, formerly of Picturehouse Cinemas and Curzon. Wood is a committed connoisseur of European arthouse cinema, the kind of engaged and reliable gatekeeper that is all too rare these days. It's Saturday tea-time and my choice is *Timbuktu*, *Electric Boogaloo* or *The Connection*. It says something for HOME's programme and the local cineaste community that *Timbuktu* is sold out. Much as I love the look of the Golan and Globus romp, Cédric Jimenez's recalibration of the French Connection story gets the nod. It's £8.50 (£7.50 online), going down to a fiver for concessions – terrific value for a moving picture in a state-of-the-art picture house.

There are five screens at HOME, ranging from the 250-capacity Screen 1 to the intimate Screen 5, which holds 36. The 58-seat Screen 3 is about half-full on a sunny early evening. The seats are very comfortable – no bum-cramps or weight-shifts in a 150-minutes sitting. The sightlines are good, the sound system immersive and the film itself not bad at all. It's unnecessarily long – at 100 minutes it would have been excellent – and it feels at times like a feature-length episode of *Spiral*. But with seedy-glam Marseille as its backdrop and with great performances from Jean Dujardin (*The Artist*) as the police magistrate and Gilles Lellouche as Gaëtan Zampa, the Mafioso object of his obsessions, *The Connection* is still a satisfying take on a classic story.

Back out into the evening, and there's the buzz and chatter of the sizeable throng awaiting the later showings. The big glass hothouse is full of life and noise. It's good, HOME. They've got it right. ☺

ahead of budget quite significantly. It means that people are coming in, they're using the space, it's busy, things sell out."

Still, it would be a mistake to downplay the difficulties facing arthouse exhibitors these days, or to pretend that Curzon Bloomsbury's bold refurbishment isn't a response to the complexities and tough realities of specialist exhibition. "If foreign-language film was always a certainty," Gerova says, "all cinemas would play them, even the multiplexes."

REGENT STREET CINEMA

Visiting the Regent Street Cinema with *Sight & Sound*'s Nick Bradshaw on the day before its official launch, I'm struck by the faint aroma of fresh paint. The venue has recently been refurbished and traces of the work that's been carried out to transform the site still linger: a few doors are missing handles, an infestation of gremlins has temporarily disrupted the phone system, and the handsome silent-era organ that is one of the cinema's proudest fixtures has yet to be installed.

What we don't find is any sense of panic or opening-night nerves. Aside from admitting to a certain trepidation about meeting Terence Stamp, guest of honour for the opening film, *Lambert and Stamp*, programmer Shira MacLeod is a model of calm: "We've got the film, we've got the posters, we've sold the tickets."

Before taking her new role, MacLeod was the energetic director of cinema at Riverside Studios for 11 years. That West London arts venue is now closed to allow for building work, including the addition of residential apartments. The development points to a tension typical of London, between private property and public spaces like cinemas, with a high capital value but relatively low yield (although proposals for the new Riverside, which is set to open in 2017, do include a cinema). The opening of the Regent Street Cinema, handsomely refurbished, in a prime West End spot, would seem to buck this trend. But while it is as impressive a piece of cinema architecture as Curzon Bloomsbury a mile or so away, the Regent Street Cinema is a special, arguably a unique, case.

For one, the cinema is a partnership with the University of Westminster, in whose building the venue sits. Its programme will be partly underlined by educational imperatives that exploit and support Westminster's academic work: MacLeod intends to show work by the students and develop seasons in collaboration with the university's academic departments.

Equally significant is the cinema's genuine historical significance. Opened as a theatre for showing magic lantern slides in 1848, it was among the first establishments in Britain to show the Lumières' work to a paying public, among the first cinemas to offer a fixed schedule of screenings, and the first London commercial venue to show an X-rated title.

The cinema's publicists are keen to promote the site's historical standing, styling the site as "the birthplace of British cinema": after a tour of the cinema – lovingly renovated in the art deco style of its late 1920s heyday – we're



Living history: Regent Street Cinema has a fair claim to having been the first permanent cinema in the UK

invited to talk to Anna McNally, an archivist from the University of Westminster. She makes a persuasive case that this was the first permanent cinema in the UK, a heritage MacLeod intends to honour through her plan to programme silent cinema. "I'd like to do a lot of that," she says, "and this is the place to do it, given the history." The installation of 35mm projectors alongside digital equipment in the booth gives the cinema access to a broader range of archive material, and also satisfies a growing niche audience of celluloid enthusiasts disappointed with DCP-only exhibition – a trend that Close-Up's cinema is also capitalising on (see page 42).

But for all Regent Street Cinema's historical importance and links to an educational institution, this is a standalone business that must operate according to the realities of today's exhibition sector. "Effectively, we need to make money," MacLeod says.

It's a tough time, she admits. When asked about the challenges new platforms such as cinema-on-demand represent to independent exhibition, she acknowledges it's a competitive market, but her strategy is based on a robust conviction in certain programming fundamentals: "It's all about the content – about the films you screen," she says.

In this respect, Regent Street Cinema will, she hopes, offer a distinctive experience. The focus will be on second-run titles, hosting festivals and double bills, a mix that owes something to MacLeod's repertory programming at the Riverside, especially the astutely matched weekend double bills.

It's an approach, she argues, that provides the cinema more flexibility in its line-up

A lot of British films get bumped off the screen if they don't make money in the first weekend. I'd like to give them a chance here

than first-run venues where programming decisions are very much dependent on opening-weekend box office. As an example, she offers her plan to support UK film: "A lot of British films get bumped off the screen if they don't make money in the first weekend, whereas I'd like to give them a chance here."

A commercial rationale underlies this programming aspiration: Regent Street Cinema will not be competing for the same box office as neighbouring first-run sites. "There's scope for people to go to Curzon," she says, "and for the same people to come here. I don't think it's an 'us and them' scenario."

It's early days, as MacLeod admits, but a glance at the programme from the week of writing, just a month after it opened, reveals a confidently eclectic selection that combines indie-cinema stalwarts (a Wes Anderson double bill), second-run arthouse titles (Vanessa Lapa's *The Decent One*, and André Semenza and Fernanda Lippi's *Sea Without Shore*), archive restorations (*Too Much Johnson*) and a masterclass with sound designer and University of Westminster lecturer Glenn Freemantle. The site will also be a partner venue of Open City Documentary Festival, screening a few of its titles in mid-June.

Admitting that her "programming may change – I may have to balance things out, make it work", MacLeod is none the less clear that Regent Street Cinema has something different to offer from other cinemas in the West End. "I don't quite understand why so many cinemas keep opening," she says of the spate of newly refurbished sites. "I feel a little bit sad that most cinemas are showing exactly the same thing. There's not that many cinemas that have their special identity anymore; hopefully this place will."



Short videos about several of these new London cinemas will be published this month at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound, along with other features about cinema culture around the UK

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DIRTY OLD TOWN

London is haunted by its film locations, but as gentrification and modernity alter the old fabric of the city, the films that were once shot there offer not only a vivid snapshot of the past but also a history lesson that shows us how we got to where we are today

By Danny Leigh

THE LOST CITY
(Clockwise from top left)
Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels (1998), *Attack the Block* (2011), *The Long Good Friday* (1979), *Naked* (1993), *Pressure* (1975), *Performance* (1970), *Notting Hill* (1999) and *Mona Lisa* (1986)

When I was a child, my father lived in a housing association flat in West London. The place was opposite another row of flats where a family friend told me they had once shot a film called *10 Rillington Place* (1970). It was only years later that I learned those other flats had been built on the site of the actual Rillington Place, and that terrible things had happened there.

In London, we all end up on set eventually, living among our memories of films. (Now I walk my son to swimming lessons through the underpass where Kubrick's droogs attacked the tramp in 1971's *A Clockwork Orange*.) But recently it's become clear the actual London is changing, quickly and profoundly. Londoners have known for a while that the city is in the grip of a kind of hyper-gentrification, accelerated by government policy: every morning we see the endless building sites, the banks of sheeny developments sold off-plan to people who will never live in them. It feels like a transformative moment; some days, like a point of no return.

A good time, then, for the exhaustive season of London films at the BFI Southbank. But a sad one too: scanning the programme, it all starts to feel like a cinematic time-lapse of everything that is vanishing.

Search contemporary London for its most celebrated film locations and you'll find a jarring split screen: then and now. The tumbledown Notting Hill townhouse at 25 Powis Square in *Performance* (1970) is now grandly handsome in mint green and the once fly-tipped gardens at its front are spruce and verdant. This is just what Notting Hill is now; what was once wild Bohemia is a hushed enclave of significant wealth, through which BMWs purr and nannies ferry prep-school boys. The keen location-spotter can leave the former residence of rock star Turner (Mick Jagger) and in minutes find the private homes of both David Cameron and George Osborne.

Sometimes the change is even more bluntly physical. The grey mass of King's Cross railway yards and gasworks that gave *Mona Lisa* (1986) its hinterland has been levelled now, reborn as 67 acres of bars, offices and gallery space. But the benchmark, of course, remains another Bob Hoskins film: *The Long Good Friday* (1979), its spectral landscape of pre-Thatcherite Docklands long remade into glinting West Wapping and Canary Wharf.

Other parts of East London ascended later. In Mike Leigh's *Naked* (1993), we watch the scabrous Johnny (David Thewlis) rage through Dalston, a once marginal place that recently became a hub of commercialised hipsterdom, lined with coffee joints and juicing stations. His odyssey also took him somewhere the film lover will feel a particular pang for: Soho. There in the doorway of Lina Stores on Brewer Street he met the splenetic Archie (Ewen Bremner), two lost souls in a familiar neon nocturne. Lina Stores is still there, but ever more lonely amid the gleam of progress. Between the manglings of Crossrail and the constant rent rises, the last traces of the close-knit low-rise Soho of *Night and the City* (1950) and *The Small World of Sammy Lee* (1962) are disappearing, their replacement by glass and steel enough to inspire an anti-gentrification campaign fuelled by the endorsements of Stephen Fry and Benedict Cumberbatch.

But as well as this parade of visual dissonance, London cinema can also be a history lesson – a breadcrumb trail of how we got here.

Bear with me, but this may be the moment to reclaim *Absolute Beginners* (1986). Julien Temple's adaptation of Colin MacInnes's novel is still remembered as a grievous *film maudit* whose financial mismanagement all but ruined the British film industry. But it's also a





Will the future protagonists of London film be found in its far outskirts, the city itself an exclusive Other as in Céline Sciamma's banlieue drama 'Girlhood'



➔ movie touchingly besotted with London, and one with at least some of the puzzle pieces to help map its development.

As a coiffured David Bowie cavorts on a giant typewriter, you reflect that the film could have appeared at no other point in human history than the 80s. But it was rooted – just about – in MacInnes's mod opus, published in 1959 as a snapshot of the moment. Through the steam of its Gaggia coffee machines, MacInnes's fixations were race and the newly christened 'teenager' – but a vital detail lurked in the background of the story.

If the Clean Air Act of 1956 rid London of its gothic horror fogs, the Rent Act of the following year had just as vast an impact. Instantly, landlords were free to raise rents without limit; the sharper-eyed soon began dislodging long-term statutory tenants in favour of more lucrative custom. In the W10 and W11 postcodes where MacInnes set much of *Absolute Beginners*, work began in earnest. Though history suggests there were other culprits, slumlord Peter Rachman was the one who became synonymous with the new climate of exploitation. A proxy made it into MacInnes's novel but in oddly innocent form: Mr Omar, who only tipped your belongings into the street if you failed to pay the rent.

Temple made the character a sweating bag of dirty tricks named Saltzman, and with some dramatic licence cast him as a key player in London's transformation. As the film looked back to 1959, it did so knowing what would happen next.

You can see the time and place as it was in a pair of films made soon after MacInnes published *Absolute Beginners*. In *The L-Shaped Room* (1962), Leslie Caron wanders the dank bedsit-o-rama of Westbourne Park Road; around the corner on Colville Terrace lay the shoddy conversions of Michael Winner's *West 11* (1963). This

was 'Rotting Hill', all crooked gas meters and broken milk bottles, still in the shadow of the 1958 race riots. But the place was changing even then. The excellent 2012 BBC series *The Secret History of Our Streets* detailed how the first middle-class adventurers now began moving in to houses around the spiritual spine of Portobello Road, drawn to the frontier ambience, just as later generations would be to Dalston, planting herbs, putting down rugs. Some squatted, others bought. Brian Jones, guitarist of The Rolling Stones, arrived in 1962.

So by the end of the 60s it made perfect sense that we would find Jagger in *Performance*, living in reclusive debauchery in Powis Square. A decade before, Rachman had had a string of properties there; *West 11*'s opening scene passes the very same house. Now, however, co-director Donald Cammell had slouched up from nearby Chelsea – another signpost en route to the future.

The area remained the centre of black British life in London, anchored by the carnival, the boom of reggae basslines from open windows. On screen, the record is Horace Ové's *Pressure* (1975), a vivid portrait of second-generation immigration set around the scuffed-up Portobello Market. But with every lawyer or music business executive who moved to Ladbroke Grove or Elgin Crescent, West London was changing. By 1981, the site of a failed pasta restaurant on Notting Hill Gate had reopened as the first branch of the estate agent Foxtons, later to become a cocksure emblem of the new London.

The ground shifted elsewhere too. Hitchcock made the last days of Covent Garden's giant fruit and vegetable market the backdrop of *Frenzy* (1972); later the site would be colonised by tourists, jugglers and finally the Apple Store. And in Wapping, director John Mackenzie set out shortly after the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 to shoot *The Long Good Friday*: Barrie Keefe's script, legendary for its prescience, found old-school villain Harold Shand poised to revive the abandoned remnants of the docks. Off camera, as Foxtons set to work in Notting Hill, so the government-backed London Docklands Development Corporation let loose a tide of private money, the remaining local families displaced by concierged dorms for City brokers.

By 1986, much of Harold's former manor was a sleek strip of wharf apartments. It was this high Thatcherite moment – the 'Big Bang' stock market deregulation would come in October – into which *Absolute Beginners* was released. A garish cocktail of celebrity cameos and erratic musical set pieces, it was buried under the derision.

But Temple had applied some interesting tweaks to MacInnes's story. The ageing fashion designer Henley was now not just a closeted grotesque, but a hawkish

MEAN STREETS
Shane Meadows's *Somers Town* (2008, above); and (below, from left) David Cronenberg's *Eastern Promises* (2007), Julien Temple's *Absolute Beginners* (1986) and Ken Hughes's *The Small World of Sammy Lee* (1962)



BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE (3)

property developer in league with Saltzman to make London ready for bland blocks of “dream homes for modern families”. (The casting came with a wink: Henley and Saltzman were played by James Fox and Johnny Shannon, previously the gangsters Chas and Harry in *Performance*). No one seemed to notice over the sniggering; anyway, at the time, London’s gentrification seemed largely theoretical. It was hardly as if the poor would be priced out of the city or that there would be no black culture in Notting Hill, was it?

The economy soon slumped, but the wheels of progress had only stalled. In 1993, Mike Leigh made *Naked*; Soho was still a fleshpot and Dalston a periphery, but he also took us to a vacant strip-lit office on Charlotte Street. Here, Thewlis’s Johnny berates the hapless night security guard Brian (Peter Wight). Asked what exactly he was guarding in this “postmodern gas chamber”, Brian replies: “Space.” Johnny sneers, but eventually the joke would be on him. In a few years the good times would be back, and when they arrived, empty square footage in Fitzrovia would come highly priced.

Naturally, West London rejoined the party. By 1999, we had the definitively titled *Notting Hill* (1999), Richard Curtis’s glacé romance starring Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts. The setting was the same Portobello Road of *Pressure*, but you would have had to squint to know it, given the spotless pastel stucco, the prettified market and, most famously, the absence of any sign of West Indian life. At the time, the film was vilified for its ethnic airbrushing; now, it looks a vision of the kind of West 11 the current prime minister might make home. Bitter pill as it may be, the truth is *Notting Hill* was every bit as oracular as *The Long Good Friday*.

In the same era, British cinema had an unexpected hit with Guy Ritchie’s *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998); its locations in Borough, Shoreditch and Bethnal Green were evidence of a speculator’s eye for the next hotspots of gentrification. In fact, the film felt of a piece with the London property market: on one hand the appropriation of working class areas by developers, on the other the ‘gor blimey’ gangsters of the aristocratically connected Ritchie.

But the new London didn’t just depend on old money. The pivotal moment in transforming the King’s Cross of *Mona Lisa* was the relocation of Eurostar to the redeveloped St Pancras. That would spawn its own movie when the company funded Shane Meadows’s *Somers Town* (2008) as an extended promo, a locally set coming-of-age story sweet enough to almost make you forget the grey zone of its origins.

And yet much of London’s wealth now came from one place: Moscow. Ritchie now jumped on the story of Russian mobsters in the capital with the noisy caper *Rockn-Rolla* (2008), though a Canadian, David Cronenberg, got there first and in finer style with *Eastern Promises* (2007). Part of that film was shot in the Middlesex Hospital, moments from where Karlheinz Böhm stalked through Newman Passage in *Peeping Tom* (1960). Already closed, it was the hospital’s last act before demolition. The site is now a luxury development.

So much has changed in so much of town you might think it would be impossible to find old London on screen anymore. Enter Matthew Vaughn, producer of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and director of this




year’s *Kingsman: The Secret Service*. Vaughn’s film relied on a sitcom-ish clash between two outlandish cartoons: a patriotic corps of super-agents disguised as Savile Row tailors, and a kid from a council estate exclusively filled with working-class thugs.

The crassness aside, in 2015 it was hard to know which was the more improbable. Across London, years of discounted sales and sellings-on of council property under right-to-buy legislation mean its estates are usually home to PR account managers, heads of IT and, in this case, people writing articles for *Sight & Sound*. (The corollary is that London’s poorest now can’t afford them.) None of this escaped Joe Cornish’s quick-witted *Attack the Block* (2011), in which a middle-class nurse in a Brixton tower block helped local kids defeat an alien invasion – but Vaughn had a different agenda. He folded his fictitious modern London into a new heritage cinema, as fake as the Victorian skyline digitally whipped up by former colleague Ritchie in his Sherlock Holmes movies. Vaughn’s own experience of the city may not run to many council estates. He lives, of course, in Notting Hill.

Maybe this is the only way for film to respond to the new realities of London: pretend they don’t exist. Purely visually, you wonder how filmmakers will deal with a city now mostly rendered in faceless glass apartment blocks. But gentrification is about more than architecture, and when the social make-up of a place changes as London’s has, the questions pile up. Will the future protagonists of London film be found in its far outskirts, the city itself an exclusive Other as in Céline Sciamma’s *banlieue* drama *Girlhood*? And what happens when more of London resembles One Hyde Park, the immense Knightsbridge development where so many flats have been left vacant (“bubblewrapped”) by their owners the whole thing is dark at night. In an emptied-out city, you can’t help but think of the opening of Danny Boyle’s *28 Days Later...* (2002), its lonely trek past deserted landmarks. Perhaps the zombies took London after all: we were just too busy queuing for coffee to notice. 

LORD OF THE RING
Richard Widmark (above)
in Jules Dassin’s classic
London noir *Night and the City* (1950), about a small-time grifter trying to make it as a wrestling promoter

 **The ‘London on Film’ season is screening at BFI Southbank, London, until September**

PROFILE

MAGNETIC POLE

Jerzy Kawalerowicz is remembered as the director of *Night Train* and *Mother Joan of the Angels*. But there was far more to his lengthy career

By Michael Brooke

Even if he'd never directed a film, Jerzy Kawalerowicz (1922-2007) would still be one of Polish cinema's most important figures. His stewardship of the Kadr Film Unit from its inception in 1955 meant that he was effectively the executive producer (and, on an official level, ardent defender) of *Kanal* (1956), *Eroica* (1957), *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958) and several more of the films that seemingly emerged from nowhere in the late 1950s to put Polish cinema on the international map. Along the way he gave an essential boost to the early careers of Walerian Borowczyk, Tadeusz Konwicki, Kazimierz Kutz, Jan Lenica, Janusz Morgenstern, Andrzej Munk and Andrzej Wajda, among others. As co-founder and president (1966-78) of the Polish Filmmakers Association he played a major role in championing the rights of his industry compatriots (specifically the right of directors to be considered the primary creators of their films); he also taught at the famous Lodz Film School from 1980, and was a member of the Polish parliament from 1985-89. As the critic Stanislaw Zawislinski observed, Kawalerowicz "was not only a witness but also an active contributor to practically all Polish transformations and turbulences after the war", though his close association with the Communist Party, vital when it came to getting things done, occasionally triggered turbulences of a more personal and career-threatening nature.

Given this constant whirlwind of activity, administrative, political and diplomatic, it's a miracle that he managed to sustain a parallel creative career at all, let alone direct some of Polish cinema's most enduring classics. Certainly, not everything he made falls under that category: like his friend and colleague Andrzej Wajda, he had troughs between peaks, and Kawalerowicz was himself brutally honest about his failures. He dismissed his output at the turn of the 1970s (*The Game*, 1969; *Maddalena*, 1971), and critics have tended to agree with his assessment – though the latter has earned a footnote in film history thanks to one of Ennio Morricone's most beloved scores. His films of the early 1950s were hamstrung by a strictly applied cultural policy of Socialist Realism, although the two-part saga *Cellulose* (1953) and *Under the Phrygian Star* (1954) did at least attempt a more nuanced portrayal of its union-agitator protagonist and his ideological struggle than was usual for the period.

Kawalerowicz's own first films for Kadr, the suspense thriller *Shadow* (1956) and *The Real End of the Great War* (1957) – about the aftermath of the Holocaust – were overshadowed by the films of his colleagues. He finally made his own

contribution to the front rank of Polish cinema in 1959 with *Night Train*, its international appeal doubtless boosted by the fact that, unlike his earlier films, it did not draw its narrative from specifically Polish historical and cultural themes. Instead, the film is set almost entirely in the same carriage of an overnight express train heading for the Baltic coast (Kawalerowicz and his team won a technical award at the Venice Film Festival for creating the illusion so convincingly in the studio). The characters are a plausibly random gaggle of gossips, voyeurs, fantasists and social commentators. There's a murderer on board too, but this quasi-Hitchcockian narrative strand is muted, functioning mainly as an excuse for the other passengers to righteously band together at the eleventh hour. Kawalerowicz is more interested in overnight soap operatics, the tension within existing couples (the lawyer and his wife) and temporary ones (Marta and Jerzy, sharing for reasons of logistical convenience), the sometimes inadvertent yet often telling revelations of troubled pasts and presents, and the abiding impression of existential loneliness

– Kawalerowicz was evidently influenced by Antonioni's *Il grido* (1957). The jazz score, by Andrzej Trzaskowski (channelling Artie Shaw, without the US jazzman's knowledge or permission), dominated by Wanda Warska's breathy, wordless female vocalising, was an important innovation: younger Polish filmmakers such as Roman Polanski had already begun working with musicians like Krzysztof Komeda on their short films, but it was Kawalerowicz's higher-profile feature that helped Trzaskowski and Komeda forge lucrative parallel careers supplying a host of Polish films with distinctive soundtracks. Polanski's *Knife in the Water* (1962), which starred Leon Niemczyk – Jerzy in *Night Train* – was merely one of the best known.

Niemczyk's reluctant travelling partner, Marta,

Condemnation of 'Mother Joan of the Angels' by the Catholic church may have been seen as mission accomplished



Riding the whirlwind: Jerzy Kawalerowicz

was played by Lucyna Winnicka, Kawalerowicz's wife and the closest thing Polish cinema had to its own Jeanne Moreau. She's at the centre of a similarly tense, circling relationship in Kawalerowicz's next film, *Mother Joan of the Angels* (1961); here, the enclosed space is a convent rather than a moving train, its inhabitants allegedly possessed by demonic forces. The film is notionally based on the same 17th-century events that inspired Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun*, which in turn inspired John Whiting's play *The Devils* and Ken Russell's 1971 film. Kawalerowicz found the story via a novella by the distinguished Polish novelist Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, whose narrative effectively picks up where Russell and Whiting left off. Father Grandier, the priest accused of using black magic to seduce an entire convent, has been burned already (the charred stake is a notable visual element in Kawalerowicz's film), so the focus shifts towards his accuser, Mother Joan (Winnicka). It's a virtuoso performance, both tender and demonic, maternal and capricious, a sympathetic smile turning rictus snarl at the drop of a hat. Father Suryn (Mieczysław Vojt), the hapless priest sent to investigate and contain the situation, is out of his depth from the start, constantly and visibly wrestling between theological theory and powerfully eroticised practice. To emphasise this, Kawalerowicz conceived his most stripped-down visual approach so far, with virtually all the action taking place in the convent, a nearby inn and the near-featureless space in between. It was both his last and *most* black-and-white film, a stark study in visual as well as religious, philosophical and sexual contrasts, its dense argument augmented by naggingly memorable images, such as a milk-white hand leaving a blackened handprint on the wall. Kawalerowicz told the authorities at the start that he intended to make an explicitly anti-clerical work; subsequent condemnation by the Catholic church may have been seen as mission accomplished.

Kawalerowicz's next project would be Polish cinema's most ambitious yet: a vast, widescreen Eastmancolor epic set in ancient Egypt and shot both in Egypt and in the less tourist-ridden deserts of Uzbekistan over three years. But while production stills from *Pharaoh* (1965) suggest DeMillean extravagance, the film is in many ways as spare as its predecessor: although it was shot in colour, yellows and browns and very occasional blues keep everything else at bay. Kawalerowicz reputedly described the film as "the anti-*Cleopatra*", and while he serves up plenty of budget-justifying spectacle, he focuses primarily on the political fight between the idealistic young Ramses XIII (Jerzy Zelnik) and his self-interested priests. The world-in-a-grain-of-sand opening sees two beetles fighting over a ball of dung, an incident that has a much greater impact than its minuscule scale might warrant – indeed, it leads to the first of many clashes between religion and pragmatism. Unsurprisingly, given the row over *Mother Joan*, *Pharaoh* was interpreted as an attack on the church, although nothing in the film makes this explicit: watching it today, one can tease out any number of parallels with stories of vainglorious attempts to bring 'progress' to 'primitive' Middle Eastern societies.



Room at the inn: Franciszek Pieczka (centre) as innkeeper Tag in *Austeria* (1982)

But it's the primitive that seems to fascinate Kawalerowicz most. He draws his visual and conceptual inspiration from Egyptian art, filling in missing details, whether in architectural or natural settings, in an unforgettably stylised way; but he intersperses moments of chilling realism – such as dozens of slaves bearing baskets full of recently severed Assyrian hands. "As much of an enigma as the Sphinx's smile," commented the *New York Times*, but it is not hard to find echoes of Kawalerowicz's other major films – notably, Ramses's existential loneliness: after a judicious change of clothing, he'd be right at home on that Baltic express.

If Kawalerowicz had had his way, his next project would have been *Austeria*, to be released circa 1967: that would have turned his strongest films into a directly chronological quartet. That film had to wait until 1982, making some largely indifferent films in the interim, though *Death of a President* (1977) was a partial return to form. In *Austeria* Kawalerowicz not only sought to recapture a world that his parents knew (he was born in Gwoździec, now in Ukraine, and grew up among Ukrainians and Jews), but also to offer at least an oblique explanation of how Poland's Jewish community could be so comprehensively obliterated. The film does not even mention the Holocaust, however: it is set three decades earlier, in the summer of 1914, the start of World War I, around an inn (the 'austeria' or hostelry of the

title) that has become a refuge for various groups (Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, a Hungarian Hussar) who have either already come into disfavour or who are convinced that this is imminent. Chief among them are a number of Hassidic Jews, who seem blithely unconcerned by what appears to be their certain fate, determined that the Lord will hear their "joyful noise" and respond accordingly. The innkeeper Tag (Franciszek Pieczka) is himself Jewish, though far less observant and with a much more clear-eyed view of the future. In contrast to the visual approach of *Mother Joan of the Angels*, Kawalerowicz makes memorably chilling use of red, as symbol of bloodshed and as its grim reality.

Austeria was Kawalerowicz's most personal film, and his last of any importance. The following year, 1983, his reputation was seriously damaged when he was perceived to have sided with General Jaruzelski's martial-law regime against former colleagues like Wajda and Krzysztof Zanussi. Of his four post-*Austeria* films, only the last attracted much attention: *Quo Vadis* (2001), a *Pharaoh*-scale blockbuster made on a budget 20 times the national average, but with only a fraction of the earlier film's power. A massive local hit, it failed to gain traction abroad, and the 79-year-old director retired from filmmaking – or at least calling the shots on set: he remained artistic director of Kadr until his death in 2007. **S**

i *Mother Joan of the Angels* and *Night Train* are available on DVD from Second Run



Death of a President (1977)



Mother Joan of the Angels (1961)

SYNTHS OF THE FATHERS

The Birds was a film about the uncontainable power of nature, but its score was a tightly controlled experiment with artificial sound

By Geeta Dayal

Of all Alfred Hitchcock's films, *The Birds* (1963) was the most sonically radical, dispensing entirely with a conventional score. Electronic sound effects took centre stage, the sinister caws of the rampaging animals synthesised by the German electronic composer Oskar Sala, using a machine. Hitchcock's birds were cold-blooded flying machines, their synthetic 'birdsong' horrifying and atonal. In retrospect, it's not difficult to envisage Hitchcock's birds as a foreshadowing of our current era of militarised drone attacks and sonic warfare.

Bernard Herrmann, who had masterminded the scores of Hitchcock's films since 1955, took a more understated role on *The Birds* as 'sound consultant'. *The Birds* required a different strategy. "We developed the noise of birds electronically because it wasn't possible to get a thousand birds to make that sound," Herrmann told *Sight & Sound* in an interview in the winter issue of 1971-72. "[Though] I guess you could if you went to Africa and waited for the proper day."

The apocalyptic noise of the birds in the film was created by Sala with the assistance of the American composer Remi Gassmann, using Sala's unique electronic instrument, the Mixtur-Trautonium. In 1962, when *The Birds* was being filmed, synthesisers as we know them were in their infancy; the first commercially available model, the Moog modular synthesiser, was not introduced until 1964. Electronic music could be created by other means – using a theremin, tape machines, custom circuitry or other custom-made devices. Herrmann was no stranger to electronics himself, having used a theremin to great effect in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951). In New York, Louis and Bebe Barron created the groundbreaking electronic score for the sci-fi film *Forbidden Planet* in 1956 using an array of hand-built circuits.

The Mixtur-Trautonium was probably the most sophisticated electronic instrument available at the time. Sala's own invention, introduced in 1952, it was a proto-synthesiser and a direct descendant of the earlier Trautonium, which was named after the German Dr Friedrich Trautwein, who invented it around 1930.

The Trautonium itself was recognised early on as a promising musical instrument, not just an intriguing futuristic contraption. Along with the Ondes Martenot, invented in France about the same time, the Trautonium was among the best-known of the electronic music devices created in the first half of the 20th century. In the 1930s it quickly achieved some traction with major composers in Germany – Richard Strauss used it for the premiere of his *Japanese Festival Music* in 1942, and Paul Hindemith composed several pieces especially for it. Hindemith also emphatically recommended the Trautonium to his students, and one of them, Sala, soon became the instrument's prime exponent in Germany.



Caws for alarm: Hitchcock during the recording of the score for *The Birds*

Sala was an inventor as well as a composer – a self-described “virtuoso of the soldering iron” with a flair for electronics. After several years of tinkering, Sala devised the updated Mixtur-Trautonium, capable of incredible nuance and richness of sound, in part thanks to an expanded range of harmonics. Sala used

the instrument to create scores for numerous films in Europe; and in 1961 he and Gassmann used the instrument to create the startling score for George Balanchine's ballet *Electronics*, premiered by the New York City Ballet.

The following year Gassmann wrote to Hitchcock, drawing his attention to the



Father of invention: Oskar Sala and his Mixtur-Trautonium

Mixtur-Trautonium and suggesting it could be used in a Hitchcock film. Hitchcock was intrigued, and soon hired Sala and Gassmann to work on *The Birds*. Gassmann and Sala were co-credited in *The Birds* for “electronic sound production and composition” and Gassmann’s name was credited above Sala’s; but while Gassmann played a key role it seems that Sala deserves the lion’s share of the credit for the sounds themselves. Sala was the true virtuoso of the Mixtur-Trautonium, Gassmann its well-connected American mediator.

Electronic sound appealed to Hitchcock’s penchant for control. “After a picture is cut, I dictate what amounts to a real sound script to a secretary,” Hitchcock told François Truffaut. “We run every reel off and I indicate all the places where sounds should be heard. Until now we’ve worked with natural sounds, but now, thanks to electronic sound, I’m not only going to indicate the sound we want but also the style and the nature of each sound.”

Though Hitchcock was not a musician, his notes on the electronic sounds to be used in *The Birds* were lengthy and detailed. For the first reel he wrote: “For the electronic sounds we could try just wing noises only with a variation of volume and the variation

Sala’s electronically generated bird sounds are so haunting that you can hear the birds even when they are not there

in the expression of it in terms of rhythm.”

Sala’s electronically generated bird sounds are so haunting and indelible that you can hear the birds even when they are not there. At the end of the film, the aggressive avian sounds seem to dissolve into silence, but one can still feel the portentous undertow. “For the final scene, I asked for silence...an electronic silence, a sort of monotonous low hum that might suggest the sound of the sea in the distance,” Hitchcock told Truffaut, conveying that the birds are still communicating with us. “We’re not ready to attack you yet, but we’re getting ready. We’re like an engine that’s purring and we may start off at any moment.” All this is suggested by a sound that’s so low that you can’t be sure whether you’re actually hearing it or only imagining it.”

Sala died in 2002 aged 91, and though he scored hundreds of films over the course of his life, *The Birds* was his most enduring legacy. Sadly, knowledge of the inner workings of the Mixtur-Trautonium died along with Sala. He never took on a student or explained the instrument in enough detail for anyone else to replicate it. The Deutsches Museum in Munich and other organisations have attempted to piece together Sala’s work from papers, tapes, and other ephemera, but the process has been slow and painstaking. Like other electronic composers of his era who worked with unique devices they built themselves, such as the Barrons and Raymond Scott, Sala’s music is tied intimately to his machines. The sounds he created remain a mystery. 📍

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

We used to think that old films were always in black and white. Now we’re rediscovering a colourful past

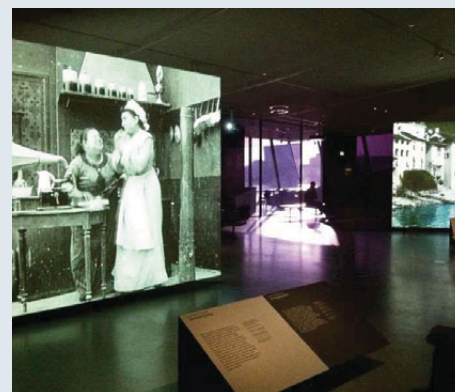


By Bryony Dixon

Colour is back in a big way in silent film. The shift to digital is set to deliver more and more early films with their original colours, putting paid, finally, to that persistent stereotype of the ‘old black-and-white film’ (an expression of derision guaranteed to get up a film archivist’s nose). Because, as we are becoming increasingly aware, most silent films, even as far back as the 1890s, were produced with colours – hand-coloured at first, with pigment applied to each frame, just like the painted postcards of the day. By about 1903 tinted or toned prints were being offered by producers, and a couple of years later gorgeous stencil colours were being developed in the film factories of Paris. Moving pictures were born into a world of visual media in which colour signified prestige; it’s about luxury and pleasure for the audience, but for the producer it was in no way frivolous: colour sells. And that is still true – the things that attracted audiences in the 1900s attract them now. For a programmer of early film, colour films are a no-brainer; the films don’t even need to have much in common – film shows sell out, DVDs fly off the shelves. Colour is perennially popular.

Black and white, not colour, is the aberration in film history. In fact, the association of ‘black-and-white film’ with ‘old’ really belongs to a particular point in history, the later decades of the 20th century. Where did this tenacious perception come from? Across the sweep of film history the era of dominance of the black-and-white film is relatively short, starting in the late 1920s. For short-lived technical reasons, applied colour such as tinting and toning went out when sound came in. Sound on film relied on a photocell to operate which didn’t work well with tinted film stock, and editing techniques had to change to synchronise with the sound, making it impractical to recut negatives in dyeing order. Colour never entirely went, of course. Systems like Technicolor continued to be developed, at considerable expense, for prestige productions – Disney cartoons, etc. But the default setting for film, for a decade or three, was monochrome. Producers made the best of the situation – think of the glories of *film noir* – but for a later 20th-century generation black-and-white film took on negative associations as creaky or arcane. It was assumed that all ‘old’ or archival film was black and white. This perception was underlined by the fact that – to adapt Henry Ford’s phrase – archivists could preserve and show early film in any colour they wanted as long as it was black and white: colour restoration was possible but prohibitively expensive.

Across the sweep of film history the era of dominance of the black-and-white film is relatively short



‘Jean Desmet’s Dream Factory’ show at EYE

It is still expensive, but digital technologies are increasingly able to render better representations of early colouring schemes for audiences. And a critical mass of these colour film restorations is building up from archives and studios around the world. These illustrate the variety and sophistication of early colour aesthetics, ranging from the bright super-saturated stencil colour of fairy films to the subtle shades of the early nature film. We now know that even relatively simple systems like tinting and toning or hand-colouring could be used for far more than primitive code for times of day – blue for night, amber for day and so on: colour could be used expressionistically to represent thought, dynamically for special effects and artistically in experimental films.

Underpinning this colourful renaissance is a growing body of work by academics, curators and archivists, with a profusion of projects, conferences, festivals, exhibitions and publications. In March, the ‘Colour Fantastic’ conference at the EYE Film Institute in Amsterdam gathered film archivists, curators and academics of various disciplines working with colour. In the papers of a workshop held there in 1995 – published as *‘Disorderly Order’: Colours in Silent Film* – the conveners looked forward to a day when film labs would offer colouring facilities for silent-era applied colour systems, such as tinting and toning, on a commercial basis. This had barely started to happen when the entire landscape of film restoration changed. Now the film labs are gone, leaving the film archives and a handful of specialists with the responsibility of preserving not just the film but the skills and equipment necessary to look after and restore the film. The archives are simultaneously refitting and retraining for the digital present and future, and the challenges of reproducing colour are a big part of that process. To add to the fun, as techniques for archival restoration have improved, expectations have risen. All too soon, the audience will take the reintroduction of colour for granted. But if we never have to hear someone dismiss our cinematic heritage as ‘old black-and-white film’, it is very much worth the effort. 📍

GONZO COLLAGE

Foraging through old film for his materials, Craig Baldwin produces essays and narratives that are both witty and prophetic

By Tony Rayns

Craig Baldwin is the Bay Area's gonzo answer to Adam Curtis. He pillages images from every conceivable source – and creates some of his own – to construct epic collage-essays and collage-narratives which set out to uncover and resist the hidden threats that menace us all. His job description is 'media archaeologist' and he once outed himself as a dialectical materialist, but it seems more user-friendly to think of him as a film and television buff with a thing for fantasy/sci-fi and a sharp, libertarian sense of humour.

By all accounts you had to be in San Francisco to catch screenings of his early, self-distributed movies: *Wild Gunman* (1978), *RocketKitKongoKit* (1986), *Tribulation 99* (1991) and *iO No Coronado!* (1992). These were apparently built almost entirely from found footage and tackled everything from *X-Files*-type paranoid (our rulers are secret aliens, poised to finish us off) to the historical depredations of the Spanish conquistadors in the Americas. The impression you get from reading about them is that they combined the Surrealist flash of Jeff Keen's Super 8 marvo movies with the from-the-dumpster aesthetic of Joe Dante's early never-ending-movie assemblages of found footage, with a smidgen of Parisian Situationist provocation added for seasoning.

The first one I saw was *Sonic Outlaws* (1995), which starts as an oddball reportage of a Goliath-beats-David lawsuit (Island Records and the band U2 came down hard on penniless indie band Negativland for using bits of U2's song 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For' while parodying both it and the name 'U2') but soon broadens into an essay on the entire phenomenon of creative theft: Mickey Mouse's appearance in porno animation, Marcel Duchamp, even René Viénet's "political repurposing" of Du Guangqi's martial-arts film *Crush* as the agit-movie *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?* (1973). The film astutely predicts the surge in hip-hop 'sampling' that's just around the corner. It plays like a manifesto for anti-corporate, hand-crafted art and succeeds in nailing the spirit of postmodernism in a whirlwind 87 minutes, even if its attempt to Americanise the French verb *détourner* (to re-direct or 'detour' someone else's artwork) doesn't quite take.

Since then Baldwin has gone for story-led structures, which forces him to shoot original, scripted footage with his own actors in addition to foraging for suitable clips from crummy and not-so-crummy genre movies, Kinescope recordings of live TV broadcasts of the 50s, state department documentaries and, for example, the old Yugoslav movie which provided glimpses of an actor playing Nikola Tesla and threw up Orson Welles playing J.P. Morgan as a bonus. Baldwin knows very well that what he's doing exactly parallels what Roger Corman did in the 60s when he bought Soviet-bloc sci-fi




In the can: underground film collagist Craig Baldwin

movies, extracted the special-effects shots and had the likes of Curtis Harrington and Peter Bogdanovich direct new linking material. But his mash-ups have a brio and wit which those Corman productions never quite achieved.

Spectres of the Spectrum (1999) has a father-daughter team leading the battle against the "New Electromagnetic Order" – essentially, the bad guys who were giving us the 'Star Wars' missile-defence shield in space. Baldwin himself describes it as "an allegory which reflects the consolidation of awesome power in fewer and fewer hands" and rallies everyone from Méliès and James Whale to Tesla himself for the attack. The feisty heroine equips herself with a Tardis in the shape of a modified Airstream caravan and educates herself in what she's up against by time-travelling back to watch "transcendentally banal" clips from *Science in Action*, the late-50s US equivalent of the BBC's *Tomorrow's World*. Edison, Bill Gates and other monopolists get a good kicking along the way.

Baldwin's magnum opus to date is *Mock Up on Mu* (2008), a 13-chapter saga which transplants a quintessentially Californian episode from the mid-1940s into the year 2019. Jack Parsons, the inventor of solid rocket fuel and an ardent disciple of the 'sex magick' occultist Aleister Crowley, met both L. Ron Hubbard (pulp sci-fi author and future inventor of Scientology) and would-be occultist

Craig Baldwin's job description is 'media archaeologist' and he once outed himself as a dialectical materialist

Marjorie Cameron in the Pasadena mansion which he turned into a "temple" for birthing a "moonchild". (Parsons later died in a mysterious explosion in his lab, and Cameron went on to appear in Kenneth Anger's 1954 *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* and two Curtis Harrington films.) Baldwin imagines Hubbard targeting earthlings from the moon, programming Cameron's brain and sending her back to earth to extract crucial science data from Parsons; Crowley himself makes a guest appearance or two, and the military-industrial complex is represented by an invented figure called Lockheed Martin. You'll be relieved to hear that Hubbard and Lockheed Martin are thwarted, but not before Baldwin has given us a pitch-perfect parody of *Lucifer Rising*, a demolition of the 'pleasure dome' of Las Vegas and a stirring tribute to the Hollywood career of Richard Carlson, star of *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. 

i Some Craig Baldwin films, including *Mock Up on Mu*, are available on DVD from othercinemadvd.com



Mock Up on Mu (2008)



Sonic Outlaws (1995)

INDUSTRIAL ACTION



Union non-pacific: images of protest from DS30

Thirty years after the Miners' Strike, industrial pioneers Test Dept are using sound and image to continue the struggle

By Sukhdev Sandhu

No one who saw industrial music band Test Dept in the early 1980s ever forgot the experience – certainly not the filmmaker Andrew Kötting: “The first time I saw them, if I misremember correctly, was at the Lee Centre in Lee Green, South London. The place was hugger-mugger to the rafters. Brett Turnbull was projecting images of Eastern European factory-scapes and winsome topless youth. A stageful of drummers were setting about their business. Deep-veined metallic clutter. There was something elemental and corporeal about their choreographed cacophony that had me. The noise was exhilarating. I was overwhelmed. I can still remember their smell.”

Years later, Kötting saw them again, underneath London's Westway. “They had grown in number and importance. A HUGE cult following. A subterranean gathering for other ways of being. They were now Riefenstahl muscular, perfectly formed, a bastard brew of Kathy Acker and Anselm Kiefer, the Bow Gamelan Ensemble and Kodo drummers.” All sorts of artists – the novelist David Peace, sound-sculptor Robin Rimbaud, filmmaker John Akomfrah – have talked of the band's performances in terms of shock, awe, inspiration. Test Dept used public and semi-derelict spaces, created instruments from abandoned metal objects, and brought rare and explicitly left-wing politics to the industrial music scene.

Film was a crucial weapon in Test Dept's arsenal. They were part of a vanguard of bands – among them Cabaret Voltaire and Throbbing Gristle – who, before stadium-rock concerts were watched on screen by most of their audiences, sought to integrate sound and spectacle. Band

member Gray Cunningham remembers being passionately opposed to the idea of “the pop concert as a propagandised sales pitch to sell records”. Instead, the band – who believed in Bertolt Brecht's dictum that “art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it” – saw film as a vital tool for agitation and mobilisation. Their first official release, *Program for Progress* (1984), came in the form of a videotape rather than an LP.

Turnbull, in charge of film and video design, was a huge admirer of Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein's dynamic montages. Their influence was palpable when band members played in front in of triptychs made up of Soviet-style iconography, modernist architecture, striking graphics, and photographs of the streetscapes and neighbourhoods surrounding performance venues. In *Total State Machine*, a new history of the band published by PC Press, he recalls the drama and labour that went into each show: “I was usually on scaffolding planks in whichever auditorium in the dark, with pints of beer being thrown around. I was faced with film snapping and having to get splicers out in the middle of songs trying to patch the films together and get the show back up and running.”

Test Dept blazed a trail at home and abroad throughout the 1980s, the fervour of their performances stoked in large part by rage at the Conservative government's war on the National Union of Miners and, more broadly, on the trade union movement. Though they went on hiatus in 1997, three members – Cunningham, Paul Jamrozky and Angus Farquhar – reconvened last March to stage a sound and image installation,

The band believed in Bertolt Brecht's dictum that ‘art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it’

DS30, at Dunston Staiths in Newcastle. On to this huge wooden structure, built on the river Tyne in 1893 to ship coal across the world, and now a majestic and poignant relic of the city's industrial past, they projected images assembled from various archives in the north-east.

DS30 also drew on the band's own archive – fiery, kinetic imagery that recalled some of Derek Jarman's most chiliastic work from the Thatcher era. It marked the 30th anniversary of the Miners' Strike, and flew the flag for fraternity, resilience and the dignity of labour that the strikers sought to preserve. Many viewers, who were watching from a boat, had emotional responses. “By the end of the journey, veterans of the strike and the mining communities were in tears. It was very overwhelming,” says Jamrozky.

DS30 was accompanied by a manifesto whose strident language (sample lines: “Industrial sabotage and wanton destruction / The rich seam of corporate privilege / A doctrine designed to shock / Political social cleansing”) reflected the band's awareness that the industrial and imaginative landscapes they were saluting are almost unrecognisable to the children and grandchildren of former miners. According to Jamrozky, “The younger people on the boat came from those communities that have been decimated, totally wiped out. There's lots of junkies there. Unemployment rates are huge.”

DS30 feels especially significant in the wake of the recent general election. “It's important that history is kept alive,” declares Jamrozky. “You can't change your circumstances if you don't know your history. The ghosts of the communities live on if the images are still there. The memories might haunt the place.” If Test Dept had their way, their rich archive would function less as a ghost and more as a cluster of landmines only now detonating.

i DS30 will be screened at the Durham Miners' Gala on 9 July. For details, see testdeptds30.co.uk

P'tit Quinquin

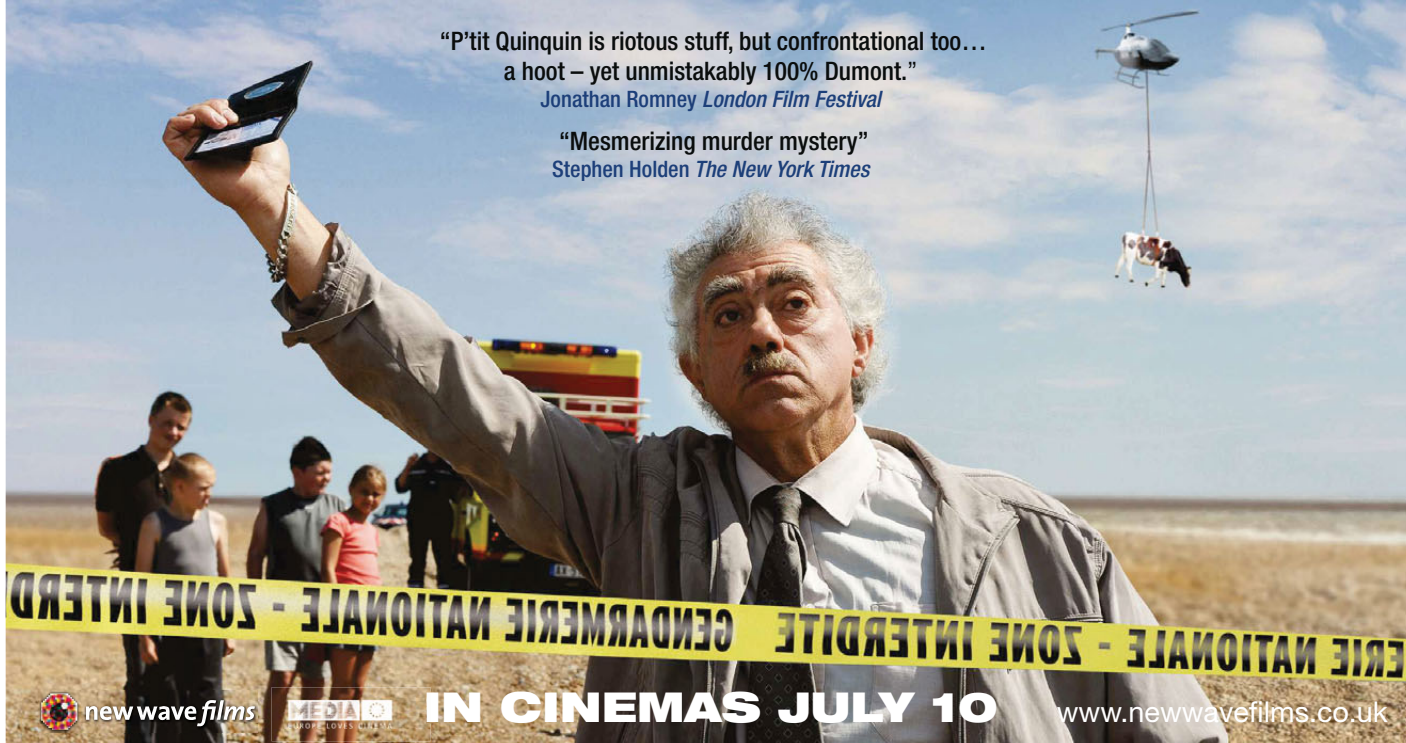
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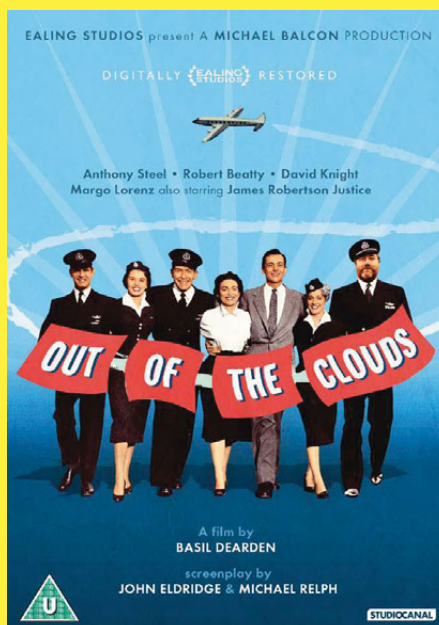
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Reviews



77 Iris

It would take a genius to get underneath the surface of such a highly lacquered persona as that of 93-year-old fashion icon Iris Apfel, yet that's what Albert Maysles is able to do. But you have to pay attention



60 Films of the month



66 Films



94 Home Cinema



104 Books

Love & Mercy

USA 2015

Director: Bill Pohlad

Certificate 12A 120m 51s

See Industry,
page 14

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Anyone who suppresses a yawn at the thought of another stolid, rise-to-fame music biopic along the lines of *Ray* (2004) or *Walk the Line* (2005) can take heart: Bill

Pohlad's take on the famously troubled career of Brian Wilson, moving spirit behind 60s surf-rock band The Beach Boys, sets out to do something very different from the norm and for the most part pulls it off. The involvement of co-screenwriter Oren Moverman (working from a first draft by Michael A. Lerner) augurs well from the start, since he scripted the decidedly unconventional Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* (2007), which enlisted, *inter alia*, Cate Blanchett, Richard Gere and Marcus Carl Franklin to portray His Bobness.

Love & Mercy goes some way in that direction, casting two very different actors as Brian as it repeatedly shuttles between the two main timeframes: the mid-60s, when Brian's yearning after uncharted musical waters increasingly alienated the rest of the group; and the 80s, when he fell, a distressed and mentally unhinged figure, into the malign hands of a therapist. Brian in the 60s is played by Paul Dano, who, having put on a little weight for the role, looks remarkably like the young rock-star – a similarity underlined when, over the end credits, we see the real Brian Wilson singing the title number. Brian in the 80s is played by John Cusack, who looks nothing like him – or like Dano.

This matters less than one might expect. Cusack, giving his best performance for some time, plays the older Brian with a gentle, wounded grace, moving like someone drowning but too diffident to struggle and splash, and his vocal mannerisms reflect Dano's without descending into outright mimicry. There's a spiritual affinity between their performances, if not a physical one.

Also common to both phases of Brian – at all events, in this film's reading of him – is the central paradox of his character: the way he sabotaged his own instinct for creative freedom by submitting himself to the authority of controlling father-figures. In the 60s it's his actual father, Murry (Bill Camp), who in further flashbacks we see violently beating him as a child; at one point he deals the boy a brutal blow on the right ear which, we're told, caused Brian to lose 96 per cent of his hearing on that side, an affliction that may have partly explained his idiosyncratic take on his inner sound-world. Murry later became The Beach Boys' manager. They eventually sacked him, but that doesn't seem to have stopped him selling off all

the rights to their music to A&M for \$750,000 without consulting them. "Five years from now," he comments when Brian remonstrates, "no one is going to remember you or The Beach Boys."

Even after all this, now an adult and an internationally famous rock-star, Brian is still desperate for his abusive parent's approval. In the film's most moving scene he sits at the piano painfully roughing out 'God Only Knows' while his father listens contemptuously. Repeatedly begged for his opinion, Murry finally dismisses the song as "a suicide note". A similarly insensitive verdict comes from Brian's cousin Mike Love (Jake Abel), the bandmate least in sympathy with his ideas, when he complains of the *Pet Sounds* album that "even the happy songs are sad" – at once getting the point and totally missing it. ("It should sound like a cry – but in a good way," is Brian's take on it.) In his incomprehension, Love stands in for The Beach Boys' early fans, who constantly clamoured for the group to get back to the carefree numbers about sun and surf and girls that made their name. "We're not surfers," Brian responds, "and surfers don't listen to us."

Sound mixer Edward Tise and his colleagues create an unsettling, intricate audio design to convey the often overwhelming tumult of sounds, voices and fragments of music that crowd Brian's mind. At times these stimuli serve him as a source of inspiration ("Sometimes you hear a voice that wants to express itself," he tells Melinda Ledbetter, the woman who falls in love with him and eventually rescues him) or a creative guide. "How's that work," a studio musician asks him, "two bass lines in different keys?" "Well, it works in my head," Brian responds. At other times the inner noise becomes a torment. In one disturbing scene at a dinner party we hear the sounds of cutlery on china crescendo into a terrifying cacophony, causing Brian to leap up screaming from the table.

Here and there Pohlad's use of metaphor becomes over-literal. In one scene, Brian splashes about alone in the deep end of a swimming pool, urging the other band members, lounging in the shallow end, to come and join him. Likewise, having veteran sessions drummer Hal Blaine tell him "We've played with everyone – Sinatra, Elvis – but you've blown our minds" feels nudging to the point of intrusion. But for the most part the film operates by implication, painting a subjective picture of a gifted but deeply troubled man, and flipping deftly back and forth between the time zones to suggest links and parallels.

Brian's yet more damaging father-figure in the 80s is sinister therapist Dr Eugene Landy (a shaggy-toupeed Paul Giamatti, giving it full-on evil Svengali). We see nothing of the series of drug-fuelled breakdowns that intervened; during the 70s, it seems, Brian stayed almost permanently in bed and his weight ballooned to 340lbs. But it's evident, given the already



Let's go surfing: The Beach Boys in *Love & Mercy*

rampant paranoia of the earlier period ("Phil Spector has the house bugged!") and the precarious balance of the musician's mind – the dinner-party episode, an extreme panic reaction to fear of flying – that Landy can have had little trouble in pushing him back into a state of dependency and emotional childhood, nor in consolidating control by keeping him isolated and making him see anybody and anything as a potential threat to his wellbeing.

Love & Mercy isn't all gloom & madness, though. Humour features, especially in the studio sessions for *Pet Sounds*, where the rest of the band sit bemused or exasperated while Brian coaches a pair of cellists in a rasping three-note motif for hours on end, or experiments with ever more recondite instrumentation: hairpins on the piano strings, flutes, harpsichords, bicycle bells and a brace of barking dogs. ("You think we could get a horse in here?" he muses hopefully.) Alarmed by what he sees as the threat of The Beatles, who have just released *Revolver* and who he's convinced are ripping off his ideas, he urges his sceptical bandmates, "We can't let them get ahead of us! I can take us further... I'm gonna make the greatest album ever made!"




John Cusack ('Brian future') and Elizabeth Banks



Paul Dano ('Brian past'), second from left



Brian in the 60s is Paul Dano, who looks remarkably like the young rock-star. Brian in the 80s is John Cusack, who looks nothing like him – or like Dano

Also on the positive side is the luminous presence of Elizabeth Banks as Landy's nemesis Melinda, who became Brian's second wife. In many ways Banks has the most demanding role of the four principals, given that she's required to suggest sanity and normality in the face of three varieties of highly coloured weirdness, and also has to maintain the plot's most conventional, even corny element: vulnerable guy rescued from bad man by love of good woman. It says a lot for Banks's performance that Melinda never comes across as saccharine or bland. She is appealingly warm and gentle but, when Landy's dictatorship pushes her beyond endurance, she reveals a core of steel – and helps Pohlad's film carry off what might otherwise seem an impossibly fairytale ending. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Bill Pohlad
Claire Rudnick
Polstein
Written by
Oren Moverman
Michael Alan Lerner
Based on the life
of Brian Wilson
**Director of
Photography**
Robert Yeoman
Editor

Dino Jonsäter
Production Designer
Keith Cunningham
Score
Atticus Ross
**Production
Sound Mixer**
Edward Tise
Costume Designer
Danny Glicker

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**Production
Companies**

River Road
Entertainment
presents a River
Road/Battle Mountain
Films production
Executive Producers
Dr Eugene
Ann Ruark
Jim Lefkowitz
Oren Moverman

Cast
John Cusack
Brian Wilson, future

Paul Dano
Brian Wilson, past
Elizabeth Banks
Melinda Ledbetter
Paul Giamatti
Dr Eugene
Landy, 'Gene'
Jake Abel
Mike Love
Brett Davern
Carl Wilson
Graham Rogers
Al Jardine
Kenny Wormald

Dennis Wilson
Bill Camp
Murry Wilson
Erin Darke
Marilyn Wilson
Joanna Going
Audree Wilson
Mark Linett
Cuck Britz
Johnny Sneed
Hal Blaine
Max Schneider
Van Dyke Parks
Diana Maria Riva

Gloria

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[1.85:1]**

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing UK

Southern California, the mid-60s. Brian Wilson, his younger brothers Dennis and Carl, their cousin Mike Love and their schoolfriend Al Jardine have enjoyed chart-topping success as the group The Beach Boys. Brian longs to get away from the hedonistic sun-and-surf numbers that made their name; he brings in lyricist Van Dyke Parks and starts introducing more complex harmonies and eclectic scoring. The result is the album 'Pet Sounds'. The rest of the group – especially Mike – find themselves increasingly out of sympathy with Brian's ambitions and his erratic, drug-fuelled behaviour. Parks is pushed out of the group and Brian's projected album 'Smile' remains abortive.

Two decades later. After several nervous breakdowns, Brian is under the control of his therapist and guardian

Dr Gene Landy. Claiming the musician has paranoid schizophrenia, Landy keeps him isolated and heavily drugged. In a Cadillac showroom, Brian meets car saleswoman Melinda Ledbetter. They're mutually attracted and become lovers; Landy, fearing Melinda's influence, forbids her to see Brian. With the help of Brian's housekeeper Gloria, Melinda gets hold of his will, which bequeaths all his money to Landy. She contacts Brian's brother Carl. Landy is served with a restraining order forbidding all contact with Brian.

The film cuts between these two periods. End titles relate that Landy was stripped of his licence to practise therapy and that Brian recovered his equilibrium, married Melinda, resumed performing and in 2004 released 'Smile' to widespread acclaim.

P'tit Quinquin

France 2014

Director: Bruno Dumont

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

If the term 'subversive' simply means that something confounds our expectations, then it's true to say that Bruno Dumont's *P'tit Quinquin* is subversive on several levels. Released theatrically (and premiered at Cannes last year) as a single feature, but made as a four-episode miniseries for TV channel Arte, *P'tit Quinquin* – named after a lullaby of the Picardy region – is an elusive proposition. It certainly confounds our expectations of writer-director Dumont, who until now has been identified with a particularly austere form of quasi-realist drama with transcendentalist overtones. The very idea of a Dumont comedy seems implausible, yet *P'tit Quinquin* raises the teasing possibility that more humour than suspected might have been present all along in, say, Dumont's 1999 film *Humanity*. The fact remains: *P'tit Quinquin* really is funny, in a sometimes surprisingly broad, knockabout way, while being utterly recognisable as the work of one of Europe's most intransigently distinctive auteurs – partly because of the familiarity of its northern French settings, partly because of the formal, poised framings of DP Guillaume Deffontaines, who shot Dumont's previous film, *Camille Claudel 1915* (2013).

Dumont has described *P'tit Quinquin* as a parody of *Les Experts*, the French title of *CSI*; suffice to say, expertise doesn't come into it. Not only does the film's murder investigation, pursued by two egregiously clueless gendarmes, never find a solution, it barely gets under way in the first place; ostensible sleuth Van der Weyden is too busy mumbling vague warnings about the presence of evil to ask any real questions. This is a detective who barely twigs that two key characters are brothers; who can't tell a stallion from a mare until the horse's penis is pointed out to him; and who never remotely takes an interest in the motorcycle-riding, balaclava-wearing figure whose silent conspicuousness encourages us to identify him as a likely murder suspect (and prime candidate for the 'devil incarnate' that Van der Weyden hypothesises about). Little is explained, little has much narrative consequence: revelations that we might expect to be shocking are delivered with an ostentatious flatness (marked by ineffectual shrugs from the perplexed lawmen) or left hanging in silence (the death of the immigrant boy Mohamed, apparently by his own hand, raises none of the questions it would in a realist crime drama).

But Dumont also confounds our expectations of – and tests our comfort with – comedy. The reason lies partly in the film's macabre content: cattle mutilations; the grisly notion of human body-parts being eaten by cows; and most disturbing of all, the casual manner in which it is revealed that the film's most conventionally attractive presence, amateur chanteuse Aurélie, has been devoured by the very pigs she had been caressing in the previous sequence. That sequence, which begins with Aurélie ruefully contemplating the persecution and death of her admirer Mohamed, represents an oasis of seriousness in a seemingly facetious film, all the more so because of the accompanying strains of Bach;



Sleuth will out: Bernard Pruvost as Inspector Van der Weyden

yet that solemnity is undercut by an additional layer of pigs' grunting on the sound mix.

Dumont consistently makes us question what we feel comfortable laughing about. He has always specialised in casting non-professionals, often disabled or with learning difficulties. And he has always denied setting up his characters for derision or condescension; the case can certainly be made here that viewers' unease is more to do with their own expectations and prejudices than with any exploitation on Dumont's part. Yet *P'tit Quinquin* goes out on a limb with scenes involving disability that seem to take the shock-comedy tenor of the Farrelly brothers school to startling extremes: one character with learning difficulties keeps executing sudden 360-degree turns, then falling over; another causes chaos in a restaurant, flinging cutlery around.

We can only assume that the actors involved all relish the opportunity to twit conventional representations of disability, to put on a mischievous show that allows them to use their physicality in ways that conventional screen fictions never would. This would confirm Dumont's claim to be making a more than usually democratic cinema; he casts the supposedly unphotogenic types that cinema habitually excludes (eg, young Alane Delhay with his twisted nose as Li'l Quinquin; gap-toothed

Philippe Jore as Van der Weyden's lieutenant), not presenting them as grotesques but celebrating their defiantly irreducible difference.

Then there's the perennial question of how Dumont represents the people of his own northern French region. The local *Ch'ti* accent is impenetrably dense in the case of actor Bernard Pruvost, who plays Van der Weyden; the humour it generates can best be conveyed by imagining a British TV thriller in which the detective incongruously speaks with ripe Brummie inflexions. *P'tit Quinquin* would indeed be painful to watch were we not able to feel confident that Pruvost in particular, as the idiot cop, is complicit in the joke, since so much revolves around the strangeness of his



Alane Delhay (left) as Li'l Quinquin



by Quinquin himself, that drives Mohamed to react violently, firing from his window while shouting “Allahu Akbar!” and “Shame on France!” Inarticulate though he is, Van der Weyden more or less perceptively diagnoses the boy’s malaise when he comments, “We didn’t accept him, so he went berserk.” It’s the only time he proffers a social explanation of events, amid his vaporously metaphysical ones.

P’tit Quinquin is full of the latter kind of analysis of what’s at play, as when Van der Weyden confusedly comments, “The devil’s amidst us... he’s looking down on us.” Such explicit philosophising is normally absent in the dialogue of Dumont’s films, though his titles often provide nudges to metaphysical speculation: *The Life of Jesus*, *Outside Satan*. In this sense, Van der Weyden’s thoughts confirm the sense that Dumont is parodying his own work (or critical readings of it). *P’tit Quinquin* is *Humanity* remade as farce: another murder mystery, another clueless policeman named after a painter (there Pharaon De Winter, here Flemish master Rogier van der Weyden), and *Humanity*’s shockingly clinical shot of a murder victim’s naked body, alluding to Courbet and Duchamp, bathetically echoed as a close-up of a cow’s backside.

For all the grotesquerie, however, *P’tit Quinquin* achieves something that *Humanity* arguably did not – it generates a genuine sense of mystery. That mystery is nothing to do with the mere riddle of the corpses; it is the mystery that remains in the human gazes on which the film ends – the challenging stares of Quinquin and Dany, and the space they encompass in reverse shot, the empty field beyond their farmyard. 📺

With a pronounced limp, wildly unkempt facial hair and a propensity for non-stop galvanic tics, Pruvost is mesmerising to watch

screen presence. With a pronounced limp, wildly unkempt facial hair and a propensity for non-stop galvanic tics, Pruvost is mesmerising to watch, and an unfailingly engaging comic player. That he and the other actors are filmed with love and respect as well as fascination is something one can only gauge from intuition, yet you sense throughout that *P’tit Quinquin*’s cast are having a ball, not least when ostensibly sombre moments are broken up by fits of corpsing.

Still, it’s not always easy to know exactly where the laughing-at/laughing-with barrier lies: Aurélie’s talent-show number ‘Cause I Knew’ is actually written by Lisa Hartmann, the actress who plays her; notwithstanding the song’s generic familiarity, it’s an undeniably effective earworm. But you wonder whether Hartmann realises what a terrible singer she is (Quinquin and his pals mercilessly mock Aurélie’s whooping melisma).

The film’s evident tenderness is offset by a bitter, even angry sense of reality; Dumont’s tolerance for individual humans doesn’t preclude a dispassionate, even unforgiving view of humanity as a whole. Yes, Quinquin and his young neighbour Eve truly love each other, and there’s a wonderfully unpatronising warmth in the scenes in which they embrace. “Children are our only hope,” a priest comments – and yet it is the vicious racism of the children, headed

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Jean Bréhat
Rachid Bouchareb
Muriel Merlin

Written by

Bruno Dumont

Director of Photography

Guillaume

Deffontaines

Editors

Bruno Dumont

Basile Belkhiri

Sound

Philippe Lecoeur

Olivier Walczak

Emmanuel Crosset

Costumes

Alexandra Charles

©3B Productions,
ARTE France,
Pictanovo, Le Fresnoy

Production Companies

A series written

and directed by

Bruno Dumont

A 3B Productions,

ARTE France

production

with Pictanovo and

the support of la

Région Nord-Pas

de Calais

In partnership with

the CNC and Le

Fresnoy - Studio

national des arts

contemporains
In association with
Cofinova 10

With the participation

of TV5 Monde, CNC

Developed with the

support of Pictanovo

Cast

Alane Delhaye

Lil’ Quinquin

Lucy Caron

Eve Terrier

Bernard Pruvost

Commandant Van

der Weyden

Philippe Jore

Lieutenant Rudy

Carpentier
Philippe Peuvion

Quinquin’s father

Céline Sauvage

Quinquin’s mother

Corentin Carpentier

Jordan

Julien Bodard

Kevin

Lisa Hartmann

Aurélien Terrier

Stéphane Boutillier

Monsieur Lebleu

Frédéric Castagno

vet

Cindy Louguet

Madame Campin

Baptiste Anquez

Mohamed Bhiri

Jason Ciot
Dany Lebleu

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

New Wave Films

Onscreen English title

Lil’ Quinquin

Presented as a feature

film (197m approx.),

aspect ratio 2.35:1,

at Cannes Film

Festival (Directors’

Fortnight), May 2014.

Presented as a
mini-series (4 x 52m

approx.), aspect

ratio 1.78:1 on

French television,

September 2014.

Episode titles: 1.

L’bêt’humaine/

The Human Beast;

2. Au cœur du

mal/The Heart of

Evil; 3. L’diable in

perchonne/The Devil

Incarnate; 4. Allah

Akbar/Allahu Akbar

Part 1: ‘The Human Beast’ The ‘Côte d’Opale’, northern France, present day. Police officers Captain Van der Weyden and Lieutenant Carpentier investigate a dead cow that contains the body parts of a local woman, Madame Lebleu. During their investigations the officers are followed by a band of children headed by farmer’s son Lil’ Quinquin and including the young neighbour he loves, band trumpeter Eve.

Part 2: ‘At the Heart of Evil’ Quinquin and his friends Kevin and Jordan declare war on two immigrant boys; one of them, Mohamed, is the son of abattoir worker Bhiri, reputedly Madame Lebleu’s lover. Later, Bhiri is found dead.

Part 3: ‘The Devil Incarnate’ Van der Weyden questions

Madame Campin, leader of the local majorettes. At a Bastille Day parade, he realises that she and Lebleu, a farmer, are lovers. Later, Lebleu too is found dead. Van der Weyden discovers that Quinquin’s father is related to Lebleu; they turn out to be brothers. Mohamed flirts with Eve’s older sister Aurélie, but her friend showers the boy with racist abuse. Van der Weyden is warned by a prosecutor to speed up his investigation.

Part 4: ‘Allah Akbar!’ Mohamed fires a gun from his house; Van der Weyden brings the boy out dead. Aurélie is found dead, eaten by pigs. Madame Campin is found dead on the beach. Van der Weyden toys with the idea that the killer might be Quinquin’s Uncle Dany, who has learning difficulties, but the crimes remain unsolved.



Teenage kicks: Maria Alexandra Lungu as Gelsomina (left), with Agnese Graziani as Marinella

The Wonders

Italy/Switzerland/Germany 2014

Director: Alice Rohrwacher

Certificate 15 111m 4s

See interview
on page 12

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

Without any of the self-importance, maudlin sentimentality or winking reflexivity that characterises most coming-of-age tales,

Alice Rohrwacher's second feature is a patient argument for, and quiet toast to, a rapidly disappearing way of life. Like her exquisite debut *Corpo celeste* (2011), *The Wonders* expresses the array of feelings that come at the cusp of adolescence, more often than not wordlessly conveyed through Hélène Louvart's beautiful cinematography. Here, these experiences are interconnected with the sociologist Saskia Sassen's ideas of how cities and public spaces are increasingly 'theme-parked', sometimes finding strange parallels between them.

Gelsomina (Maria Alexandra Lungu) lives on a farm in the Tuscan countryside with her fiercely independent German father Wolfgang (Sam Louwyck), French mother (Alba Rohrwacher), three younger sisters and Cocò (Sabine Timoteo), who acts like an aunt and

helps work the land but isn't a blood relation. (Cocò's presence suggests that the farm was once a commune and that she's the lone hanger-on – an impression reinforced by the polylingual parents and a surprise visit from Coco's old beau.)

The family's main source of income – and most time-consuming form of labour – is their apiary, where Gelsomina, as the eldest, serves as her father's most active assistant. Diligent and skilled in their work, she and Wolfgang are as close as such a man could allow himself to be to his offspring. (While they're tending to the bees, he quietly tells her, "We're better alone, you and I.") After chancing on the set of a Fellini-esque ad for *Countryside Wonders*, a TV talent-show in search of the best regionally produced food, Gelsomina becomes intrigued by the beautiful host Milly (Monica Bellucci) and secretly enters the family honey into the competition. After Gelsomina admits what she's done, everyone in the family is charmed by the prospect – except Wolfgang.

The schism between father and daughter widens with the arrival of the silent Martin (Luis Huilca Logrono), a German juvenile delinquent whom the family agrees to rehabilitate through farm work and carefully scripted *Supernanny*-like behavioural interventions. (Both yelling and hugs are *verboden*.) Martin also comes with a nice stipend, provided that regular reports are filed to the state; however, neither this money,

nor the floundering farm, seems to stem the tide of their financial ruin, and the film's quietly observed finale shows everyone sleeping on a mattress outside their now empty house.

Much of the film's power comes from its embrace of the ambiguous – specifically with regard to time: this story could've occurred at any point in the past 50 years, something reflected in the characters' indeterminate leftie utopianism and their clothing, which blend styles from the early 1980s to the present. (Digital technology is absent as well, which, given the characters' economic status, isn't entirely implausible even today.) The negative side of such ahistoricism is shown by *Countryside Wonders*, which only cares about spectacle, cash and making the region more tourist-friendly; all the show's participants are therefore fitted out in wildly inaccurate 'Etruscan' costumes. (Cocò is given a gigantic leopard-print hennin, which she uses to blow her nose when the show's proceedings get a little heavy for her.)

Equally timeless and profitable is the myth of the family farmer that *Countryside Wonders* (and many a politician) exploits: they're simultaneously hardworking nuclear families, emblematic of traditional values, and remarkable artisans who fight the evils of nutrient-free, mass-produced food by crafting organic comestibles. As *The Wonders* reveals, the freedom from the corrupting modern world the family supposedly

enjoys is entirely false, largely because of the work of external forces whose implications become deeply personal. The family's neighbours, the Portarenas (Carlo, his mother, and his grandmother), use a pesticide provided by the Farmers' Association which inadvertently kills a large number of Wolfgang's bees; rather than sticking together, Carlo laughs it off and says he'd rather have larger crops. (Naturally, he goes on to win the competition with his prosciutto, bashfully telling Milly that he wants to turn his land into a resort in order to attract women.) And although Gelsomina's family is indeed nuclear, it's perpetually on the verge of collapse because of Wolfgang's anger, caused in large part by his inability to follow his ideals owing to financial obstacles; Gelsomina's mother is frequently shown sleeping in a separate room from her husband, and at one point threatens to leave. (The conservative 'change or die' false alternative offered by the state is meanwhile embodied by the social worker who oversees Martin's case and lectures Wolfgang on his stubbornness.)

But because this story is told through Gelsomina's eyes, it makes sense that so much of the detail that drives the plot is opaque, full of gaps and elisions. Whatever the family's ideological underpinnings might be, why they're so doggedly committed to them and what larger forces might be encroaching on them (aside from what the TV competition represents) are never spelled out, and simply get taken for granted – they could be harmless hippies or Baader-like terrorists on the run. (When given the opportunity to explain how he makes his honey and what's so special about it live on television – given carte blanche to proselytise to the masses – Wolfgang, his eyes bulging, nervously stammers a barely coherent response: "I'd like to say: certain things can't be bought... I was saying, when we work this honey... The world is about to end.") Similarly, who or what is funding *Countryside Wonders* remains unclear, though the contest's tawdry production values strongly suggest state funding, perhaps the efforts of a Berlusconi-style tycoon who's vertically integrated himself into politics, media and land development, or some more benign but equally profit-driven force. (Given Italy's climate of corruption, it would probably be unclear even if Gelsomina were more grown-up.)

The film's close alignment with its protagonist also allows for moments of marvellous, otherworldly desire, something that characterises the film just as much (if not more) than its anti-consumerist politics. Each of Gelsomina's small, secret explorations of sensuality is suffused with that raw, clumsy curiosity of anyone's pre-teenage years, yet unfolds without being cringeworthy or overly joky, be it when she scurries into a barn with her sister Marinella to pantomime 'drinking' a beam of light, performs a pop song about the promise of eternal love (complete with exaggerated choreography she's invented) with the same sister in tow, or performs a trick that involves bees crawling out of her mouth and on to her face without stinging her. (The penultimate scene, shot in a manner that's more dreamlike and abstract than any other part of the film, suggests a degree of ambiguous physical and emotional intimacy between Gelsomina and Martin.) Gelsomina's fascination with Milly and the television show comes from a very similar place, as much prompted by her curiosity about her impending development into womanhood as by Milly's clean white gowns, Barbie-doll



The kids are all right: Angelica (Alba Rohrwacher) and children

Even after multiple viewings, 'The Wonders' remains a tender portrait of an era that we might already, unknowingly, have passed beyond

glamour and fairy godmother-like promise of change. In some way, the TV crew function as Milly's minions, and achieve no small measure of magic by rigging lights and managing multiple camera set-ups inside an island necropolis where the big competition is filmed.

Building on deeply personal – but not strictly

autobiographical – foundations, Rohrwacher has constructed a world that, despite its chimerical elements, feels closer to day-to-day experience than many more seasoned directors have achieved in their entire careers. It's also a rare film that makes a convincing and reasonable political statement. (For those who think it is unjustified, Tuscan *agriturismo* vacation packages are available to anyone who wants to experience the wonder of *The Wonders* first-hand and help herd lambs themselves.) In perfect harmony with itself, the film retains a documentary feel without resorting to heavy-handed *vérité* aesthetics. Even after multiple viewings, *The Wonders* remains a sumptuous, tender portrait of an era that we might already, unknowingly, have passed beyond. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Carlo Cresto-Dina
Karl Baumil
Baumgartner
Tiziana Soudani
Michael Weber
Written by
Alice Rohrwacher
Director of Photography
Hélène Louvart
Editor
Marco Spoletini
Art Director
Emilia Frigato
Original Music
Piero Crucitti
Sound Recordist
Christophe Giovannoni
Costume Designer

Loredana Buscemi
©Tempesta srl/Amka
Films Productions/
Pola Pandora
Filmproduktions
GmbH/ZDF/RSI
Radiotelevisione
Svizzera SSG SSR
idée suisse
Production Companies
Tempesta and Rai
Cinema present
a Tempesta/
Carlo Cresto-Dina
production
produced by
Tempesta with
Rai Cinema in co-
production with Amka

Films Productions
and Pola Pandora
Filmproduktion in
co-production with
RSI Radiotelevisione
Svizzera/SSG
SSR and ZDF/Das
Kleine Fernsehspiel
in collaboration
with Arte with the
support of Ufficio
Federale Della Cultura
(UFC) Svizzera
and Medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg
Financed by
Investitionsbank des
Landes Brandenburg
in collaboration with
Cineteca di Bologna
Made with the

participation of
Regione Toscana
in association with
BNL-Gruppo BNP
Paribas under the
rules on Tax Credit
Recognized film of
cultural interest with
support from the
Ministero dei Beni e
delle Attività Culturali
e del Turismo
A Tempesta Amka
Films Productions
and Pola Pandora
Filmproduktions
GmbH co-production
Produced by
Tempesta with
Rai Cinema in
co-production with

RSI Radiotelevisione
Svizzera/SSG
SSR and ZDF/Das
Kleine Fernsehspiel
in collaboration
with Arte
Cast
Maria Alexandra Lungu
Gelsomina
Sam Louwyck
Wolfgang
Alba Rohrwacher
Angelica
Sabine Timoteo
Coco
Agnese Graziani
Marinella
Luis Hualca Logrono

Martin
Eva Lea Pace Morrow
Caterina
Maris Stella Morrow
Luna
Monica Bellucci
Milly Catena
Carlo Tarmati
Carlo
Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles
Distributor
Soda Pictures
Italian theatrical title
Le meraviglie

The Tuscan countryside, possibly the present day. Gelsomina and her younger sisters help their father Wolfgang with the apiary. While swimming afterwards, they come across a commercial shoot for 'Countryside Wonders', a television contest for farmers in the region. Back at home, Wolfgang agrees to let German juvenile delinquent Martin live with them in exchange for monthly stipends. Martin is immediately put to work helping with the honey. Some of the bees are poisoned by pesticide used by Carlo, a neighbour taking part in 'Countryside Wonders'.

While selling honey at a local market, Gelsomina signs up for the competition, against her father's wishes. One afternoon, the parents entrust the girls with the collection of the honey; one of Gelsomina's

younger sisters cuts her hand and has to go to hospital for stitches. While the girls are at the hospital, one of the farm machines overflows, covering the floor with honey. A man from the TV show arrives at the farm, but the girls manage to clean up in time to pass the sanitary inspection. When Wolfgang returns, he is furious and refuses to speak to Gelsomina.

Everyone travels to a nearby island, where 'Countryside Wonders' is being filmed. Carlo wins the competition. Martin runs away after being kissed by Coco (who lives with Gelsomina's family on their farm) and is left on the island. The parents, out of money, sell their flock of sheep. Gelsomina spends the night camping with Wolfgang. The next morning she joins the others on a mattress outside the now empty house.

Best of Enemies

USA 2015

Directors: Morgan Neville, Robert Gordon

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

"Now listen, you queer, you stop calling me a crypto-Nazi or I'll sock you in the goddamn face and you'll stay plastered!" With this outburst, ultra-conservative intellectual William F. Buckley Jr spectacularly lost it on live television – and, to the unconcealed delight of his opponent Gore Vidal, equally visibly lost the argument.

The context was the ninth of ten debates between the two men – so alike in their cultured East Coast backgrounds, so utterly different in temperament and opinions – staged by the ABC television network in the summer of 1968. ABC, lagging badly behind the two front-running stations (NBC and CBS) in terms of ratings, came up with the idea of pitting the two sacred monsters live against each other. The national party conventions leading up to the US presidential elections – the Republicans in Miami, the Democrats in Chicago – would provide the backdrop and ample political material for the two opponents to get their teeth into. Besides each other, that is.

When ABC invited Buckley, whom they approached first, to feature in the debates, he responded that he'd be happy to appear with anyone except a communist – or Gore Vidal. He subsequently reconsidered, a decision he came to regret. "Buckley was the great debater of his time, Vidal was the great talker of his time," suggests Sam Tanenhaus, Buckley's biographer and one of the several talking heads brought in to provide context and commentary in Morgan Neville and Robert Gordon's documentary *Best of Enemies*. The difference in body language is revealing: as the argument heats up, Buckley leans forward, his rictus grin tightening into a snarl; Vidal leans back in his chair with a feline smile. After it was all over, Vidal boasted that he had "left the bleeding corpse of William F. Buckley on the floor of the conference hall in Chicago". Most commentators agreed, judging Vidal the winner, mainly on the strength of Buckley's moment of meltdown. But neither man could let the crucial incident go; both returned to it time and again in their writings and conversation. When Buckley died in 2008 Vidal, who outlived him by four years, wrote "RIP WFB – in hell."

ABC, for its part, was delighted. The debates



Odd couple: William F. Buckley Jr, Gore Vidal

had caused its ratings to soar. (The network's cash-strapped condition was amusingly revealed when, the day before the Florida convention opened, its jerry-built on-site studio caved in, causing the staff to flee in panic.) The underlying thesis of Neville and Gordon's film, though, is that the Buckley-Vidal debates, riveting television though they were, ushered in a steady deterioration in US TV news presentation whose outcome we're still living with. In 1968, as Richard Wald, former president of NBC News, observes, a sober political neutrality was expected from the major networks – much as it still is from the BBC. Walter Cronkite for CBS and Chet Huntley and David Brinkley for NBC were nationally respected figures, trusted to be objective. From their onscreen reporting it would have been hard to guess which party they supported. Today, of course, we have Fox News.

Visually the film is staid, consisting as it does mostly of vintage TV footage interspersed with talking heads. The content, though, more than makes up for any lack of visual pizzazz. Neville and Gordon provide plenty of contemporary context: the killing, only a few weeks earlier, of Robert Kennedy (who loathed Vidal almost as much as Buckley did); the Chicago riots during the Democrat convention; the seemingly unstoppable rise of Ronald Reagan. The assembled experts and witnesses make cogent points. But always we come back to that most compulsive of spectacles: two men in dark suits, sitting in swivel chairs against a curtained backdrop, talking. And what talk! ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Morgan Neville
Robert Gordon
Photography
David Leonard
Graham Willoughby
Mark Schwartzbard
Edited by
Aaron Wickenden

Composer/Original Score
Jonathan Kirksey
Sound Mixers
Jade Howard
Dennis Hamlin
Aaron Webster
Tom Hurxthal

Ben Posnack
Steve Clack
Michael Lonsdale
Dimitri Tisseyre

@Sandbar, LLC
Production Companies
Magnolia Pictures

and Participant Media present in association with ITVS
A Tremelo/Media Ranch production
A co-production of Sandbar, LLC and the Independent Television

Service (ITVS) with funding provided by The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)
Executive Producers
Julie Goldman
Cliff Phillips

readings by **John Lithgow**
Kelsey Grammer
In Colour
Distributor
Dogwoof

A documentary about the 1968 televised debates between William F. Buckley Jr and Gore Vidal.

With the campaign for the US presidential election hotting up, ABC Television – whose ratings are lagging behind front-runners NBC and CBS – decides to stage a series of ten live debates between two of the country's most prominent intellectuals: ultra-conservative William F. Buckley Jr and ultra-liberal Gore Vidal. Five debates will be held in Miami, where the Republican convention is being held, and five in Chicago for the Democrats. Since both men are

highly educated, highly articulate and loathe each other both personally and politically, the quality of debate is exceptionally high. The climax comes during the ninth debate, when Vidal goads Buckley into a violent verbal outburst. ABC's ratings soar.

With the help of onscreen commentators, the documentary places the Buckley-Vidal debates in their social and cultural context, suggesting that for all their high entertainment value, they paved the way for the biased and confrontational news reporting on today's US television.

Beyond the Reach

USA 2014

Director: Jean-Baptiste Leonetti

Certificate 12A 91m 0s

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

Horror movies that strand their protagonists in the wilderness commonly pit modern city types against people whose murderous depravity is aligned with being rural and poor. This desert duel to the near-death flips that convention: its monster is a sharp urban sophisticate, while the virtuous ones he threatens, stalks and kills are stunted hicks.

Aided by the casting of Michael Douglas as the alpha city slicker, this adaptation of Robb White's novel *Deathwatch* becomes a blunt allegory for the circumstances of America's financial crisis. Conspicuous consumers like Douglas's John Madec aren't living the American Dream, it suggests, but betraying it: his off-road Mercedes is imported from Europe; he is about to sell his company to China; even his hunting rifle is a fancy foreign import. "All us folks round here use Brownings, Winchesters, Remingtons," notes young tracker Ben – fine American killing brands all! Shortly thereafter, Ben will throw his lot in with this unpatriotic corporate shark and will suffer keenly for it.

Ben's plight as he is pursued through the desert heat by an increasingly deranged Madec, as the latter tries to frame him for his own accidental slaughter of a drifter, is envisaged with a certain style and discipline by James Cameron's sometime collaborator Russell Carpenter. The story, however, offers little emotional punch. Madec is too clearly signposted as a bastard from his first moment on screen for his swerve into mania to stir any sort of angst. Ben, meanwhile, is an unprepossessing character, his portrayal by Jeremy Irvine mumbly and lustreless. Most of the energy is with Douglas, but even he can't turn this into a fun guilty pleasure. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Michael Douglas
Robert Mitas
Screenplay
Stephen Susco
Based on the book entitled *Deathwatch* by Robb White
Director of Photography
Russell Carpenter
Editor
Adam Wolfe
Production Designer
Clark Hunter
Music
Dickon Hinchliffe
Sound Mixer
Bayard Carey
Costume Designer
Lahly Poore

@Furthur Films, Inc.
Production Companies
Lionsgate and Furthur Films
present in association with Literal Media
Executive Producers
Stephen Susco
Philip Elway

Cast
Michael Douglas
John Madec
Jeremy Irvine
Ben
Hanna Mangan
Lawrence
Laina
Ronny Cox

Sheriff Robb
[uncredited]
Martin Palmer
Charlie

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Curzon Film World

The American southwest, the present. Desert tracker Ben says goodbye to girlfriend Laina, who is leaving for Denver. Ben acts as a guide on a hunting expedition for LA businessman John Madec. Madec accidentally shoots drifter Charlie and declares he will frame Ben for the crime. Ben evades Madec with the help of supplies left by Charlie. He knocks Madec out using Charlie's catapult, and takes him to the town police station, but Madec escapes. Ben joins Laina in Denver. Madec tracks him down and disturbs them in bed. Laina shoots and wounds him; Ben takes aim to kill.

Born of War

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Vicky Jewson
Certificate 15 108m 19s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

The second feature from Oxford-based writer-director Vicky Jewson (*Lady Godiva*), *Born of War* marks out interesting territory as a rare female-led espionage/action film, but stumbles somewhat.

The plot is driven by an assortment of female characters. In the prologue, male warlords dither under attack, while an angry Afghan woman turns a machine gun on the British outsider (Lisa Kay) who has bedded her husband. Later, the heroine's troubles are due to the committed perfidy of a mid-level woman spymaster (Lydia Leonard), who might be warped by trying to live up to the legendary reputation of her spy father (are we supposed to think James Bond or George Smiley?).

Sofia Black D'Elia (of *Project Almanac*) is Mina, the innocent involved in intrigue, marked as the daughter of Afghan warlord/terrorist/rebel Khalid by a hereditary white streak in her dark hair. Mina quickly picks up the table-turning, gun-snatching, weapon-improvising skills she needs to get by in the world of high-stakes international double-crossing. She turns a snapped CD into an improvised shiv and shoves villain Dagar's head into a burning gas-jet, inflicting stuck-on-oatmeal make-up scars on Avin Shah for the rest of the film; and she is as capable of sidling along the balconies of blocks of flats when her safe house is exposed to the enemy as she is getting by in the Afghan wastes. Yet for all the commitment to restoring the gender imbalance of the genre, James Frain gets top billing over Black D'Elia for the secondary role of grizzled mentor and escape-expediter Simon.

The script, by Jewson and producer Rupert Whitaker, is full of outrageous contrivance and fallback cliché. The moment when Mina, freshly escaped from some new peril and disguised in a veil, happens to bump into Simon on the street is so convenient and unlikely that any other film would have it as a set-up hinting that the ostensible good guy is in on the conspiracy. Here, it's just a lazy plot convenience that the audience is expected to swallow as the film gets on with business. It's theoretically interesting that Khalid, labelled a terrorist by the west, seems genuinely to be fighting for his people against an evil oil company, but he's a thinly conceived, quickly-killed-off character and Philip



Mina got a gun: James Frain, Sofia Black D'Elia

Arditti has too reedy a screen presence to justify the fearsome reputation. Similarly, it's never established whether duplicitous MI6 agent Olivia (Lydia Leonard) is doing deals for her own benefit or carrying out covert western policy. Somehow, the film addresses the situation in Afghanistan without mentioning heroin or Islam. All this would matter less if *Born of War* were more exciting, but Jewson doesn't have the resources for the *Taken*-level thrills that might have made the appealing Black D'Elia's Mina a potential franchise heroine. She gets to gouge a tracking device out of her arm without flinching, just like the 1980s macho masochists who proliferated in the wake of *Rambo*; otherwise she relies on a few moves taught by Simon, and these aren't choreographed or shot especially well. There are home invasions, escapes, shootouts, fist-fights, explosions and a scuffle on a private jet, but all barely on the level of the average direct-to-DVD effort. For someone who loses three parents and is awakened to global injustice over the course of a few days, Mina remains surprisingly cool – with none of the quiet moments of grief or despair that, for instance, Modesty Blaise and Furiosa are given to demonstrate that they feel more deeply than their male action-hero colleagues. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Rupert Whitaker

Writer

Alan Heartfield

Story

Vicky Jewson

Director of Photography

Malte Rosenfeld

Editor

Vicky Jewson

Production Designer

Stephanie Denington

Music

James McWilliam

Sound Supervisor

Wayne Reay

Costume Designer

Poppy Lockton

©Born of War Ltd

Production Company

A Vicky Jewson film

Executive Producers

Mick Southworth

Martin McCabe

Cast

James Frain

Simon

Sofia Black D'Elia

Mina

Lydia Leonard

Olivia

Michael Maloney

Ian

Philip Arditti

Khalid

Michael Brandon

Harm Helder

Lisa Kay

Daphne

Avin Shah

Dagar

Rafaela Pugh

Dee

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Independent

Distribution

The Wakhan Corridor, Afghanistan, 1988. Daphne, a British woman, survives an attack on the remote site where warlord Khalid employs her as a nanny to his son. The boy is killed in the bombing and Daphne is unjustly accused of betraying Khalid to the Soviets.

Oxfordshire, present day. Dagar, a mercenary, murders Daphne while trying to kidnap Mina, her daughter. Olivia, an MI6 agent, places Mina in a safe house with minder Simon, but Dagar tries to snatch her again. Olivia tells Mina that Khalid is her father and out for revenge. Mina volunteers to be tagged and sold to Khalid so that the terrorist can be tracked down.

In Afghanistan, Mina is taken by Khalid, who has only just learnt of her existence. It transpires that Daphne's murder was part of Olivia's plan to track down and kill Khalid, who is fighting against corrupt oil interests. Khalid is killed but Mina survives and, aided by Simon, sets out to get revenge on Dagar and Olivia – whom she kills in combat. Simon ensures that Mina and her young sister Dee are able to escape to new lives in Canada.


The Burning

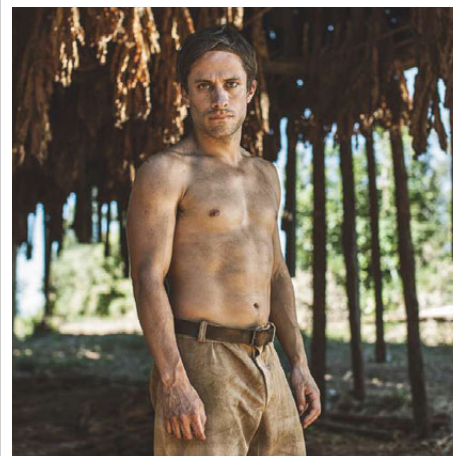
USA/Argentina/Brazil/France/Spain 2014
Director: Pablo Fendrik
Certificate 15 100m 37s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Flames shoot along the surface of a river and the surrounding trees catch fire. Another little corner of South American jungle gone up in smoke – or perhaps it's something more metaphorical, as the film's original Spanish-language title, *El ardor*, might suggest. Certainly the context rings true, as mercenaries conduct a brutal slash-and-burn campaign of deforestation and murderous intimidation against the small farmers standing in the way of powerful industrial interests and a lucrative soya cash-crop. Another vulnerable tobacco smallholding is their next target, but the villains reckon without a ferocious protector named Kai, played by producer-star Gabriel García Bernal with a look of serene focus and a river-pattern tattoo emblazoned across his back. He claims to be motivated by vengeance against the killers who took out his family, but as one who makes his first entrance emerging mysteriously from the greenery and later enters a trance-like communion with his environment, he's also a figure who exemplifies the native tribespeople's close relationship with the jungle – possibly even the physical embodiment of the spirit of the land itself. Certainly he gets respectful looks from the magnificent jaguar that lords it over the locality and tucks into more disposable members of the cast.

Shades of Walter Hill's *Southern Comfort* (1981) and John Boorman's *Deliverance* (1972) ensue, as a bloody ongoing game of cat-and-mouse plays out between Bernal's traditional jungle craft and the gun-toting gang who have farmer's daughter Alice Braga in their grasp. While the slightly built Bernal might not seem cut out for such he-man stuff, his close-ups show a willed intensity that's certainly convincing enough in the moment. He gets away with it, and so, in a way, does writer-director Pablo Fendrik, who delivers a film that's full of expertly crafted violence and occasionally breathtaking images of the area's wild flora and fauna, peopled by actors (not just Bernal, but the resourceful Braga and taciturn chief bad-guy Claudio Tolcachir) who can stare into the middle-distance and look as if they really mean it.

On reflection, of course, it's bunkum. The overall trajectory towards a climactic shootout and decisive man-to-man duel is formulaic to a fault, the notion of Bernal as some sort of spirit-warrior is somewhere between 



Fire in the belly: Gael García Bernal

glib and ridiculous, and the haste with which Braga throws herself at him (though her role is admittedly more fully realised than the usual damsel in distress) brings to mind those mid-70s Burt Reynolds flicks where you just knew that somehow, somewhere, hero and heroine would be getting it on. In a sense, *The Burning* takes itself terribly seriously so we don't have to, yet for all its evident flaws it plays disarmingly well. Fendrik's tactic of cutting without warning into unflinching carnage keeps the action on its toes, and he does a very fine job with the final-reel confrontation, as the combatants flit in and out of billowing smoke set by Bernal to confuse his attackers. This is where Fendrik's Leone-style squinting close-ups really come to the fore, and yet the moviemaking's got enough poke to stand comparison with its own frame of reference. Superficially involving, but involving nonetheless. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Gael García Bernal
Juan Pablo Gugliotta
Nathalia Videla Peña
Written by
Pablo Fendrik
Director of Photography
Julián Apezteguia
Editor
Leandro Aste
Art Director
Micaela Saiegh
Original Music
Sebastián Escofet
Julián Gándara
Sound
Leandro De Loreda
Costume Designer
Kika Lopes

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Magma Cine,
Bananeira Filmes,
Manny Films
Production Companies
Participant
Panamerica presents
a production of

Magma Cine, Telefe,
Aleph Media
A film by Pablo
Fendrik
Developed thanks
to grant aid from
Ibermedia
Support from
Amiens International
Film Festival -
Screenplay
Development Fund
Executive Producers
Jeff Skoll
Jonathan King
Pablo Cruz
Axel Kuschevatzky

Cast
Gael García Bernal
Kai
Alice Braga
Vania
Claudio Tolcachir
Tarquino
Chico Diaz
João
Jorge Sesán

The Argentine jungle, present day. Tarquino and his brother Tulio head a mercenary gang working for industrial interests out to clear the forest and remove the peasant farmers working the land. Their next target is the tobacco holding of poor farmer João; they shoot João's guest Jara, force João himself to sign a sale notice before beheading him, then abduct his daughter Vania – without realising that they're being watched by the mysterious Kai. He tends to Jara's wounds and later rescues Vania from her captors. A native attuned to the spirits of the forest, Kai saw his family wiped out by the same villains. After he and Vania make love, Kai stages a successful raid to retrieve the sale notice. Tarquino's men give chase, though they lose one of their number to El Tigre, the man-eating jaguar frequenting the vicinity; Kai holds them off with a hail of handmade spears and a sprung leg-trap, leaving Tulio badly wounded. Kai and Vania return to the tobacco farm, where a restored Jara, himself a former mercenary who's changed sides, helps them plan their defence. Using burning leaves to create a smokescreen, the trio pick off the invaders, with Vania firing the crucial shot that kills Tulio. Kai and Tarquino decide matters with a shotgun duel; Kai kills Tarquino. Kai leaves Vania and Jara to rebuild, and returns to the jungle as El Tigre looks on.

The Choir

USA/United Kingdom/Canada 2014
Director: François Girard
Certificate PG 102m 47s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

Québécois director, writer and occasional Cirque du Soleil producer François Girard has made only five features since his debut, *Cargo*, in 1990, with most of those – save for 2007's dreary period misfire *Silk* – having classical music and performance as a thematic driving force. His 1993 breakthrough, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, was a playful and inventive survey of the eponymous pianist, while 1998's sprawling *The Red Violin* traced the titular instrument's progress through four centuries of international ownership. *The Choir*, made by Girard following a lengthy hiatus spent working in theatre and TV, presents a familiar artistic student/mentor dynamic (one most recently used to searing effect in Damien Chazelle's *Whiplash*) in its tale of a disaffected kid who literally finds his voice after joining a prestigious choral academy. It's Girard's most conservative and soft-centred movie by far, though there's something endearing about its gentle earnestness, and a handful of appealing performances lend some occasional grace notes.

Barely noticed by his alcoholic single mother and forever on the brink of expulsion from school, 12-year-old Stet (Garrett Wareing) has it tough. Somehow spotting his unusual vocal talents, a kindly teacher (Debra Winger) arranges a visit to the school by an elite boys' choir led by exacting conductor Anton Carvelle (Dustin Hoffman), who's left bemused when the boy flees an informal tryout. When mum dies in a road accident, Stet's estranged dad (Josh Lucas), a wealthy Manhattanite who has kept number-one son a secret from his new family, waves a fat cheque to persuade the sceptical Carvelle to allow Stet to enrol and board at the academy – a gothic Hogwarts-like pile that seems a long way from Stet's smalltown Texas home.

Writer Ben Ripley's previous script was for 2011's tortuous but painstakingly structured sci-fi puzzle *Source Code*, so it's both surprising and plausible that his work here is by turns



The sopranos: Dustin Hoffman

facile and schematic. Stet's clashes with his predominantly upper-crust fellow boarders are predictable enough, with room for a cartoon villain in the form of nemesis Devon, a sinister blond moppet who's loath to relinquish his star-pupil mantle. Teachers, meanwhile, are split between supercilious (Eddie Izzard's snobbish Brit) or patiently encouraging (Kevin McHale's junior tutor). The film is strongest when Stet and Carvelle lock horns. Hoffman is on commanding form as the gruff, pedantic choirmaster, who's seen early on likening the polyphony created by his four distinct vocal sections to the points of a crucifix. Alone in the chapel later, Stet paradoxically mimics this grandiose display, accusing Carvelle of having a God complex. The wise old man has his capricious tantrums too – threatening to quit if a talented pupil is expelled.

Hoffman has strong support from Kathy Bates as the academy's plain-spoken administrator, unflappable even while exasperated by Carvelle's whims. Newcomer Wareing does a solid job of conveying Stet's deep resentment and loneliness, but the film's real trump card is its music. Girard deftly combines diegetic and soundtrack performances, and there's a plaintive edge to the fact that Stet's ability will effectively be lost in a year or two. But under the otherworldly song, the earthbound drama can only feel pretty ordinary. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Judy Cairo
Jane Goldenring
Written by
Ben Ripley
Director of Photography
David Franco
Edited by
Gaétan Huot
Production Designer
Jane Musky
Original Score
Brian Byrne
Sound Recordist
Tom Nelson

Costume Designer
Yoona Kwak
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Production Companies
Informant Media
presents an Informant
Films production
in association
with Informant
Media, Carol Baum
Productions,
Goldenring
Productions and
Hallmark Hall of Fame,

Embankment Films
A film by François
Girard
Produced with the
interim financing
by National Bank
of Canada – TV
and Motion Picture
Group and Three
Point Capital, LLC
Executive Producers
Michael A. Simpson
Eric Brenner
Grant Guthrie
Ben Ripley
Darrel Casolino

Guirec van Slingelandt
Rob van den Berg
Paul B. Loyd Jr
Jeff Steen
Bob Westendarp
Jarod Becker
Tim Haslam
Hugo Grumbar
Brent Shields

Cast
Dustin Hoffman
Anton Carvelle
Kathy Bates
headmistress

Eddie Izzard
Drake
Kevin McHale
Wooly
Joe West
Devon
River Alexander
Raffi
Sam Poon
Frederick
Dante Soriano
Fernando
Erica Piccininni
Debbie
Grant Venable
Andre

Garrett Wareing
Stet
Josh Lucas
Gerard
Debra Winger
Ms Steel

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Curzon Film World

US theatrical title
Boychoir

Texas, present day. Stet, a troubled and antisocial 12-year-old, has a rare talent for singing that's encouraged by his teachers at school. When Stet's single mother is killed in a road accident, his estranged, wealthy father Gerard – whose wife and family in New York are unaware of Stet's existence – wants nothing to do with him. However, he pays for Stet to enrol and board at the prestigious National Boychoir Academy, under the tutelage of renowned choirmaster Anton Carvelle. Carvelle recognises Stet's potential but waries of his bad behaviour and confrontations with other pupils. When Stet assaults star pupil Devon for

playing a cruel prank, the school moves to expel him – a decision reversed when Carvelle threatens to quit. Carvelle replaces the ill Devon with Stet as soloist for an upcoming performance in New York. Gerard feigns ignorance when he is sent tickets for the concert, but his family insist they attend. During the concert, Devon tries to sabotage Stet's solo by hiding the sheet music. The plot backfires: Stet prevails without the music and Devon is disciplined. Carvelle thwarts Gerard's plan to move Stet to a Swiss school by threatening to reveal Gerard's secret. Gerard later tells his wife everything; the family invite Stet to live with them.

Cub

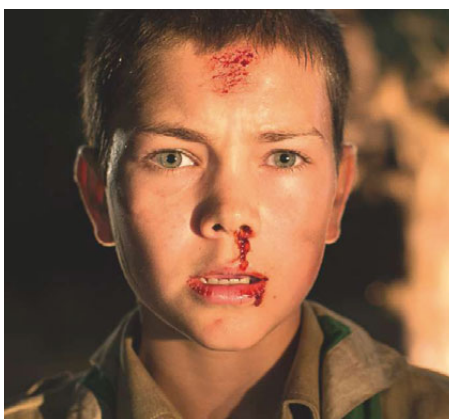
The Netherlands 2014
Director: Jonas Govaerts

Reviewed by Michael Pattison

As its pre-credits prologue makes clear, *Cub* works respectfully within, and comically against, slasher conventions. Chased by her attacker, a blonde, bloodied woman runs frantically through a forest crying for help, before seeing that most familiar and relieving of sights: the headlights of an approaching car. Unlike the final sequence of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), however, this eternally welcome sign of civilisation turns out to be a cruel gag: the would-be rescue vehicle is an elaborate mechanised prop designed to lure victims even deeper into despair. Just as the woman realises she's done for, we cut to black – though not before a hand grabs her throat.

Cub, the debut feature of Belgian director Jonas Govaerts, is a rug-pulling if somewhat half-baked horror with cultish appeal, which throws a number of old-fashioned tropes against one another to frequently amusing effect. Its story centres around Sam (Maurice Luijten), a 12-year-old member of an Antwerp Scouts group about to enjoy a woodland camping trip led by the older Kris (Titus De Voogdt) and Peter (Stef Aerts) – whose own youthful naivety might account for the presence of Jasmijn (Evelien Bosmans), Peter's girlfriend and the troupe's designated cook, and Zoltan, Peter's dog. But when two local lads refuse to vacate the land on which the scouts had intended to camp, Kris and Peter drive deeper into the woods than planned – cueing for Sam a series of encounters with someone he takes to be Kai (Gill Eeckelaert), a masked boy whose violent deeds are mistaken by others for those of a werewolf.

If the script, by Govaerts and Roel Mondelaers, hops between the age-old traditions of campfire tales and the more visceral scares of contemporary slasher films, it also sinks increasingly into nonsensical storytelling, thereby undoing the intriguing atmosphere that Govaerts and cinematographer Nicolas Karakatsanis have conjured in the earlier stages. Though the film refreshingly undercuts genre traits ("Kai can kiss



Scouting for blood: Maurice Luijten

my balls!" is one scout's response to werewolf rumours, while in a later scene a non-diegetic hardcore track is revealed to be music from a ghetto-blasters, the unexplained presence of the woods-dwelling, booby-trap-loving perpetrator of the film's eventual set-piece murders is counterintuitive. This apparently invincible brute – a cross between De Niro's charred monster in Kenneth Branagh's *Frankenstein* (1994) and the impossibly strong killer in Alexandre Aja's *High Tension* (2003) – is so resourceful and industrious in his pursuit that it's distracting as opposed to stimulating. For starters, why hasn't he murdered the local cop before now?

One dialogue exchange, referring to men from a nearby bus depot hanging themselves in the woods when made redundant years previously, seems designed only to advance the macabre vibe rather than prime some future revelation. Perhaps the broader joke here is that all the groundwork regarding characterisation (including Sam's alluded-to troublesome background) is itself a prank – one whose punchlines see two giant trees crushing a character with a hilariously sickening thud and a Mercedes truck mowing down a tent full of children. **S**

Dear White People

Director: Justin Simien
Certificate 15 106m

See Feature
on page 32

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

The initiates of *Animal House* may have been on 'double-secret probation' with their school's humourless administration, but nearly 40 years later they're on the honour roll. That film didn't originate the reliably relatable slob-vs-snob dynamic underpinning so much American film comedy – for that you can thank Groucho Marx and Margaret Dumont – but John Landis's 1978 hit still feels like a primal scene of sorts: a hazy, undisciplined bacchanal populated by up-and-coming kids who mostly burned out or faded away – not unlike college, in fact.

The appeal of *Animal House* lay in its canny rejection of the elitism associated with post-secondary education in the US. Although its undergraduate protagonists flunked out of school, we were assured they would go on to more prosperous careers than their straight-A peers. In this way, the movie got to have its keg and chug it too.

Even if Justin Simien's *Dear White People* probably owes more to Spike Lee's *School Daze* (1988) and the outrageous affirmative-action satire *Soul Man* (1986) than *Animal House*, it's tempting to see it as a spiritual sequel – and intentional reversal – of Landis's classic. This time out, the most sympathetic characters are the over-achievers – the ones who get their homework done and chase after reference letters and recommendations with single-minded determination. They're also predominantly black or mixed race. The film takes its title from the catchphrase of campus radio DJ Sam (Tessa Thompson), a stylishly radical young woman who has taken it upon herself to try to trigger the not-so-invisible fault line separating white and black students at the very tony (and totally fictional) Winchester College.

Sam's militancy makes her an outlier in a student community where the most popular figures are more interested in seizing their share of power than fighting it. Exhibit A is the universally beloved Troy (Brandon Bell), who preaches unity from his perch in student government – until Sam, who also happens to be his ex-girlfriend, usurps him with a fiery speech advocating that residences remain segregated in the interests of subcultural solidarity. She has also produced a student film, *Rebirth of a Nation*, comparing Tea Party activists to the KKK, which doesn't go over well in a classroom whose white students see themselves as the very model of modern, Obama-era progressivism.

Sam, Troy and the film's other major African-American characters – wannabe journalist Lionel (Tyler James Williams) and aspiring TV star Coco (Teyonah Parris) – are all bright, ambitious, smartly politicised and well positioned to shatter the glass ceilings that have been in place for generations, but they're hardly secure in their racial identities. When Troy tries to join the staff of Winchester's *Lampoon*-style publication *Pastiche*, he begins to suspect that he's being used as a token; ditto Lionel, whose homosexuality is as much of a fetish for his peers as his Afro. What's mitigating all these underlying tensions is money – everybody at Winchester seems to have some kind of safety net to fall back on. But some privileges are priceless, and all the different

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Peter De Maegd
Written by
Roel Mondelaers
Jonas Govaerts

Director of

Photography
Nicolas Karakatsanis

Editor

Maarten Janssens
Art Director
Geert Paredis

Music

Steve Moore

Sound

Antoine
Vandendriessche

Costume Designer

Margherita Sanders

@Potemkino,
Submarine

Production

Companies
Potemkino presents
a Submarine,
Crowdfunding,
BNP Paribas Fortis
Film Finance
co-production

With the support
of VAF, Wallimage/
Bruxellimage,
Nederlands Film
Fonds, Kinepolis
Film Distribution,
ZBE, Indiegogo,
Telenet, Kinology

Executive Producers

Louis Tisne
Richard Christian
Matheson

Cast

Maurice Luijten
Sam
Evelien Bosmans
Jasmijn
Gill Eeckelaert
Kai
Jan Hammenecker
poacher
Titus De Voogdt
Kris
Stef Aerts
Peter
Noa Tambwe Kabati
Pack Leader David
Ricko Otto

Cub Dieter
Louis Lemmens
Cub Dries
Thomas De Smet
Cub Steven
Pieter De
Brabandere
Cub Boris
Jessie
Tweepenninckx
Cub 'Rilatimmy'

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Altitude

Dutch theatrical title
Welp

Belgium, the present. Twelve-year-old Sam prepares for a woodland camping trip with his scout unit. Pack leaders Kris and Peter tell of Kai, a werewolf terrorising the local area. En route to the woods, the troupe pick up Jasmijn, Peter's girlfriend. While digging a hole away from the others, Sam encounters a masked feral boy, whom he takes to be Kai. That night, Kai creeps into the camp and steals Sam's pocket knife and other valuables. The next day, Sam finds a tree den and climbs into it. Believing it to be Kai's home, he later returns with some food and retrieves his knife.

When Sam catches Peter and Jasmijn having sex, Peter sets his dog on Sam. That night, Kai visits Sam; having tied the dog to a tree, he helps Sam to kill it. Peter discovers the dead dog and, joined by Kris and Jasmijn, pursues Sam. In the woods, Kris is murdered by a poacher – who soon afterwards drives a truck over the scouts' tent. Peter is killed when booby-trapped trees fall on him. Kai, working with the poacher, kidnaps Jasmijn, who awakens just in time to see Kai and Sam being pitted against one another by the poacher. Both boys fall into a deep pit and only one of them emerges; since he is wearing Kai's mask, it is not clear who has won. The boy kills Jasmijn and walks off with the poacher.



Course of action: Tyler James Williams

plot threads weave steadily towards an invitation-only fraternity party where white kids gleefully get their freak on in full hip-hop drag – a hideous display that shatters the ‘post-racial’ fantasies of characters and audience alike.

This get-together is staged as *Dear White People*’s climax and it’s a powerful sequence, a bookend to the gut-shot punchline of *Bamboozled* (2000), with preppy students in White Negro drag updating the old-school blackface and minstrel-show imagery compiled by Spike Lee. It also places the placidity of Simien’s filmmaking into sharp relief: afterwards, the flat affectlessness of the earlier scenes makes sense. There’s an archness to the style of *Dear White People* that’s entirely intentional; a lot of reviewers have invoked the pop-up-book aesthetics of Wes Anderson, while the mix of distanced widescreen compositions and bursts of classical music knowingly evokes Stanley Kubrick, especially *Barry Lyndon* (1975), which is appropriate given the newer film’s focus on ruthless class aspiration.

Just because Simien knows what he’s doing doesn’t mean it works, at least not entirely. *Dear*

White People is less than the sum of its very polished parts – a first feature that’s just impressive enough to be frustrating. Sam’s desire to turn herself into a loud-and-proud mouthpiece defines her character, and Thompson’s excellent performance connects this aggressiveness to a very plausible sort of insecurity (Sam’s own mixed-race background plays into her us-vs-them rhetoric). But elsewhere, the characters are defined more by how their creator places them on his carefully drawn-up narrative grid, and the actors are smushed into two-dimensional figures – vivid but empty vessels to carry Simien’s theme of free-floating confusion.

There’s a case to be made for the characters’ blurriness as a by-product of their youth – they’re personalities in formation – just as the film’s mildness could easily be pegged as a parody of the forcibly clenched decorum that rules at high-end universities (and, it’s implied, the corporate interests eyeballing graduates). What’s unclear is whether this reticence signifies anything beyond the director’s own sensibility. For all its hot-button rhetoric, *Dear White People* feels safely contained in a way that exceeds its satirical function. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Justin Simien
Producer
Effie Brown
Julia Lebedev
Produced by
Angel Lopez
Ann Le
Lena Waithe
Written by
Justin Simien
Director of

Photography
Topher Osborn
Edited by
Phillip J Bartell
Production Designer
Bruton Jones
Composer
Kathryn Bostic
Sound Mixer
David Parker
Costume Designer
Toye Adedipe

Production Companies
Code Red presents
in association with
Homegrown Pictures
a Duly Noted, Inc.
production of a
Justin Simien film
Executive Producers
Leonid Lebedev
Stephanie Allain

Cast
Tyler James Williams
Lionel Higgins
Tessa Thompson
Sam White
Kyle Gallner
Kurt Fletcher
Teyonah Parris
Colandrea
Connors, ‘Coco’
Brandon Bell
Troy Fairbanks

Malcolm Barrett
Helmut West
Brittany Curan
Sofia Fletcher
Justin Dobies
Gabe
Marque Richardson
Reggie
Dennis Haysbert
Dean Fairbanks
Dolby Digital

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Distributor
Curzon Film World

US, present day. At Winchester University, mixed-race radio DJ Sam White runs in a student council election against her ex-boyfriend Troy, campaigning on a ticket of keeping college residences segregated in the interests of subcultural solidarity. Her rhetoric strikes a chord with the other students and she is elected. Troy is preoccupied with his attempts to get a position at Winchester’s satirical publication ‘Pastiche’; one of the students he’s competing with, Coco, tries to boost her chances with a video blog

that includes her thoughts on campus life and race (which are critical of Sam’s radio addresses). Another aspiring journalist, Lionel, is assigned by Winchester’s mainstream student newspaper to do a story on Sam. He, Sam, Troy and Coco gain access to a campus party with a whites-only invitation list and a hip-hop theme, and are appalled to see white students mercilessly stereotyping their African-American peers. Afterwards, Sam comes to terms with the fact that she’s dating a white man and that she likes Taylor Swift’s music.

Eden

France 2014
Director: Mia Hansen-Løve
Certificate 15 130m 56s

See Feature
on page 36

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Mia Hansen-Løve’s elegiac descriptions of the ephemeral, will-o’-the-wisp experience of girlhood have earned her comparisons with Sofia Coppola, and *Eden* – in which the French director turns her remote gaze on a fading male protagonist – might at first glance appear to be her *Somewhere*. Tracing, over 20 years, the quietly devastating rise and fall of DJ Paul (Félix de Givry), it certainly works the same showbusiness territory of hedonism and ennui. Yet for all that the two share an astute attention to surface, Hansen-Løve’s film beds down deeper in its milieu than Coppola’s did. The result is a glorious celebration of the 90s dance scene which, like Hansen-Løve’s breakthrough feature *Father of My Children* (2009), asks poignant questions about the struggle involved in doing what we love.

Hansen-Løve has described *Father of My Children*, which was inspired by the suicide of independent producer Humbert Balsan, as the central episode in an autobiographical trilogy bookended by *Tout est pardonné* (2007) and *Goodbye First Love* (2011). Each of these films – despite the centrality of middle-aged men to their stories – viewed the narrative through the eyes of adolescent girls. *Eden* too draws on Hansen-Løve’s life, in that it was co-written by her brother Sven, a former DJ, and is seen from the perspective of his stand-in Paul.

The film begins in November 1992, when Paul is a starry-eyed, soft-edged, pigeon-toed teen, sneaking out to illicit raves in basement dives and warehouses, lured by the siren call of Frankie Knuckles’s now legendary ‘The Whistle Song’. From the opening meet-cute when Paul comes across the track, the first half of the film – entitled ‘Paradise Garage’ – follows his developing romance with garage music (‘a mix of machines and voices’, as he calls it) as he forms a duo with pal Stan, drops out of university and steadily builds up a following.

There are other pulls on Paul’s attention: girls (including awkward Greta Gerwig and firecracker Pauline Etienne) come and go, cocaine is snorted. But first and best is the music, and Hansen-Løve vividly evokes the excitement and freshness of Paul’s early encounters with the scene. In nightclubs, her handheld camera insinuates itself among the crowds, bobbing at shoulder height, swerving and dipping, excitable and distracted. At a party where Paul’s friends Daft Punk – the Bob Dylan to his Llewyn Davis – give birth to electronica, their now classic hit ‘Da Funk’ feels radically new. Likewise Paul and his friends, clad in high-tops and cardigans, racing to phone booths to put in calls to one another, are distinctly of the era. One of Hansen-Løve’s more subtle touches is to mark the passage into the second part of the film, ‘Lost in Music’, not with radical haircuts and makeup but with the gradually increasing presence of cell phones and the shinier skin and shorter skirts of the girls who surround Paul as his music slides up the commercial scale. He, however, changes remarkably little. Indeed, he finishes the film in the same tiny studio apartment where he began, battered, broke and exhausted: the music he loves has grown tired and the crowds have moved on to newer things.

If there’s a question at the film’s core it’s

Entourage

USA 2015

Director: Doug Ellin

Certificate 15 104m 18s

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Why is this film so bad? Let's just discount the insulting attitude to women it espouses. *Entourage*, like its precursor HBO television series (also created by writer/director Doug Ellin), has been conceived as lowest-common-denominator male fantasy, so we can take it for granted that women are going to be presented as lumps of sex-meat and/or carping killjoys. And let's, while we're at it, ignore the insulting attitude to men that such off-the-peg wish-fulfilment assumptions imply. Let's avert our gaze, if we can, from the homophobic subplot about a gay wedding, and pass over the unquestioning endorsement of unearned wealth and privilege that the film relies on. Instead, let's judge the film on its own terms. Because when we do, it still doesn't work.

The basic premise – summarised in a lengthy expository introduction – is that Vince (Adrian Grenier) is a successful Hollywood actor who has brought his childhood friends along with him through his rise to fame and fortune. This pathologically inseparable entourage consists of Eric (Kevin Connolly), who is now a film producer, Turtle (Jerry Ferrara), who has made a fortune in the tequila business, and Johnny (Kevin Dillon), a bit-part actor and long-term loser who is also Vince's half-brother. Vince's former agent Ari (Jeremy Piven) is now a studio executive and has commissioned Vince to direct a movie. The plot, such as it is, revolves around Ari's struggle to keep the project financially afloat in the face of opposition from Travis McCredle (Haley Joel Osment), the son of the film's main backer (a Texas oil baron played in a couple of brief scenes by Billy Bob Thornton).

One of *Entourage's* big problems is the set-up of this battle between Travis and Team Vince; we are expected to boo-hiss the Texan upstart because he's a shallow idiot who only wants to come to Hollywood so that he can swing his dick around, yet this is exactly the same set of qualities and aspirations that we are meant to applaud in Vince's boys. Perhaps there were layers of characterisation in the TV show which helped to build up affection for these rancid chancers, but in the film the fundamental reason why they deserve to win is entirely missing. The script simply washes its hands of any



Parked in the garage: Félix de Givry

how hard should one work for a dream? When is it time to give up? The film takes pains – occasionally at the expense of narrative thrust – to detail the tedium and sheer graft of the DJ life. Even at the peak of their career, playing parties at New York's MoMA, Stan and Paul must spend the morning after deflating balloons and sweeping glitter. The characters who exit *Eden* with their sanity intact are those who get out early – Stan, Paul's ex Louise – or who get lucky, as the affable pair behind Daft Punk do. Others, such as illustrator Cyril, find themselves consumed, or simply, as in Paul's case, spent.

At the end, Paul reads a Robert Creeley poem, 'The Rhythm', which reflects on the world's indifference to the individual, describing life as "light at the opening, dark at the closing". It's a great description of the film itself, and a perfect elegy for the career of so many artists: almost imperceptibly, euphoria cedes to melancholy as newer, fresher pretenders arrive. Yet a reprise of the film's most upbeat moment sweeps this to one side as the titles come up and we cut to Paul and Louise bouncing and bobbing to a Charles Dockins' track, fittingly entitled 'Happy Song'. Tastes change. The beat goes on. 🎧

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Charles Gillibert
Screenplay

Mia Hansen-Løve
Sven Hansen-Løve

Cinematography

Denis Lenoir

Editor

Marion Monnier

Art Director

Anna Falguères

Music Artistic

Directors

Mia Hansen-Løve

Sven Hansen-Løve

Sound

Vincent Vatoux

Olivier Goinard

Costumes

Judy Shrewsbury

©CG Cinéma, France

2 Cinéma, Blue

Film Productions,

Yundal Films

Production

Companies

CG Cinéma presents

in association with

François Pinault

In co-production with

France 2 Cinéma, Blue

Film Productions,

Yundal Films

With the participation

of Canal+, France

Télévisions, OCS,

Centre National

du Cinéma et de

l'Image Animée

With the support of

Région Île-de-France

Stan

CNC, SACEM

In association with

Cofinova 10

A CG Cinéma

production

Film Extracts

Showgirls (1995)

Cast

Félix de Givry

Paul

Pauline Étienne

Louise

Vincent Macaigne

Arnaud

Roman Kolinka

Cyril

Hugo Conzelmann

Stan

Zita Hanrot

Anais

Vincent Lacoste

Thomas

Arnaud Azoulay

Guy-Man

Paul Spera

Guillaume, 'Respect'

Sébastien

Chassagne

Hervé

Ugo Bienvenu

Quentin

Laurent Cazanave

Nico, 'Respect'

Léa Rougeron

Théodora

Pierre-François

Garel

FG animator

David Blot

Couple manager

Ludovic Bergery

Yes party DJ

Tony Humphries

Arnold Jarvis

themselves

François Buot

Cheers physio

Clara 3000

DJ Silencio

La India

Terry Hunter

themselves

Arsinée Khanjian

Paul's mother

Greta Gerwig

Julia

Brady Corbet

Larry

Laura Smet

Margot

Golshifteh Farahani

Yasmin

Olivia Ross

Estelle, writing

workshop

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Metrodome

Distribution Ltd

Paris, 1992. Student Paul sneaks out to raves with his friends Cyril and Stan, and becomes passionate about garage music. He and Stan form a DJ duo, Cheers. Their acquaintances Thomas and Guy-Man start to make their own music, calling themselves Daft Punk.

Some years later, Paul breaks up with first love Julia and begins a relationship with old friend Louise. Cheers gain something of a profile and Paul drops out of university to DJ fulltime, flirting with drug use and taking up a residency at New York's MoMA PS1. While he is in America, Cyril, who has become increasingly withdrawn, commits suicide.

Back in France, Cheers continue to play club nights,

but by 2006 the crowds are thinning out. Louise has left Paul; he is using drugs more regularly, and is in debt. By New Year's Eve 2009, with their gigs no longer attracting crowds, Stan and Paul decide to go their separate ways. Taking up with party girl Yasmin, Paul resorts to DJ-ing at private events to make ends meet. Eventually he overdoses and suffers a breakdown, after which he admits to his mother that he is addicted to cocaine and bankrupt.

By 2013, Paul is teetotal. He works for a vacuum cleaner company and attends a writers' workshop. Fellow student Estelle gives him a copy of Robert Creeley's poem 'The Rhythm'.



Bad boy: Jeremy Piven

responsibility to make us root for them. Another problem is the decision to hang the plot on the film-within-a-film that Vince is supposedly directing, which raises the expectation that there will be some attempt to lift the lid on the machinery of showbusiness. After much delay and suspense, we glimpse a few seconds of Vince's movie and it appears to be larded with all the overwrought pretension of a typical vanity project. At last, some jeopardy – has Vince helmed a turkey? But no. Ari and everyone else proclaim it a masterpiece and triumph ensues. Is this supposed to be a comment on Hollywood's skewed value system? Is the whole thing a sly satire on the vacuity and fraudulence of the American Dream? If only. In reality, this is simply a series of baffling non sequiturs that might have been put together by a committee of hormonal and not terribly bright schoolboys. So yes – a sequel is probably already in development. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mark Wahlberg
Stephen Levinson
Doug Ellin
Screenplay
Doug Ellin
Story
Doug Ellin
Rob Weiss
Based on characters
created by Doug Ellin
Director of
Photography
Steven Fierberg
Edited by
Jeff Groth
Production
Designer
Chase Harlan
Sound Design
and Supervision
Cameron Frankley
Costume
Designed by
Olivia Miles

©Warner Bros.
Entertainment
Inc., RatPac-Dune
Entertainment LLC,
Entourage Holdings
LLC and Home
Box Office, Inc.
Production
Companies
Warner Bros.

Pictures presents
in association with
Home Box Office,
Rat-Pac Dune
Entertainment
a Closest to the
Hole, Leverage
Entertainment
production
A Doug Ellin film
Executive
Producers
Wayne Carmona
Steven Mnuchin

Cast

Kevin Connolly
Eric
Adrian Grenier
Vincent Chase,
"Vince"
Kevin Dillon
Johnny Drama
Jerry Ferrara
Turtle
Jeremy Piven
Ari Gold
Emmanuelle
Chriqui
Sloan
Perrey Reeves
Mrs Ari
Rex Lee
Lloyd
Debi Mazar

Shauna
Rhys Coiro
Billy Walsh
Constance Zimmer
Dana Gordon
Haley Joel Osment
Travis McCredle
Ronda Rousey
Ronda
Scott Mescudi
Allen
Alan Dale
John Ellis
Emily Ratajkowski
Emily Ratajkowski
Billy Bob Thornton
Larsen McCredle

Dolby Digital
In Colour
Colour by
CO3
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros.
Pictures
International (UK)

US, the present. Hollywood actor Vince Chase has ended his brief marriage and is celebrating on a yacht when his friends Johnny, Turtle and Eric arrive. He explains that he wants to move into directing and his former agent Ari, now a studio executive, agrees to back his project.

A few months later, Vince's film is nearly finished but he needs another tranche of funding. Ari's main financial backer sends his son Travis from Texas to Hollywood to see a rough cut and decide if more money should be invested. However, Vince sleeps with a woman Travis had his sights on; in revenge, Travis tries to destroy the film project. Ari, who is impressed with the rough cut, puts his career on the line to defend Vince's film and eventually persuades the Texans to release the finance, but only at the cost of his job. However, the film is a critical and box-office success and he makes a fortune anyway. Turtle gets a date with a female cage fighter he has long admired; Eric is reconciled with the mother of his newborn baby; and Johnny, a struggling actor, wins a Golden Globe.

Everyone's Going to Die

Director: Jones
Certificate 15 87m 13s



Trading chases: Nora Tschirner, Rob Knighton

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"I figured if you wait 29 years to leave somewhere, you have to get at least one large body of water away. Like a fugitive. You cross water and they lose your scent."

The speaker is Melanie (Nora Tschirner), a German émigré. When we first see her, in a scene that immediately follows the opening wide shot of Folkestone harbour at dawn, she is asleep and afloat on a lilo in a suburban swimming pool, literally adrift within her environment. Though grounded, stuck even, on the coastline of south-east England, she engages in "a lot of poignant looking out to sea" as she dreams

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Kelly Broad
Jones
Written by
Jones
Cinematography
Dan Stafford-Clark
Edited by
Jones
David Stevens
Art Director
Merel Graeve
Production
Sound Mixer
Steve Thomas
Original Score

Charlie Simpson
Costume Designer
Alexandra Day
Production
Companies
Jonesfilm.tv,
Jonesfilm, Bobo
Kaminski Films

Cast
Nora Tschirner
Melanie
Rob Knighton
Ray
Kellie Shirley

Ali
Madeline Duggan
Laura
Stirling Gallacher
Jackie
Ellie Chidzey
Kate
Brett Goldstein
Richard

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Distributor
Everyone's Going
To Distribute

Folkestone, the present. Melanie, a 29-year-old unemployed German, is instructed by her fiancé Richard, a successful artist, to look after his spoilt niece Grace for his sister Kate. After taking Grace to school, Melanie meets Ray in a dingy café; she runs into him again later. Melanie encourages Ray to pay his respects to the family of his estranged, recently deceased brother Steven, and accompanies him to their house. The pair take Ray's niece Laura to the beach. Melanie agrees to meet Ray later at the café but is delayed looking after Grace. Ray surprises Kate when he comes looking for Melanie. Melanie argues with Richard over the phone. Melanie and Ray tell each other their life stories. They go to Ray's hotel room – but are interrupted by a call from Melanie's friend Ali offering her a waitressing job. Demoralised after having to serve Richard's good-looking work colleague Alex while dressed as a beaver, Melanie runs into Ray again at the harbour. He reveals that he is in town on shady business, hunting a fugitive. Both plunge into the water. Melanie declares her intention to leave for Europe the next day. Ray lets the man he has been pursuing escape, and joins Melanie on the departing train.

of life back on the continent. Betrothed, not altogether happily, to successful artist Richard, Melanie is settling in every sense of the word, but her restless nature remains. The first words we hear her utter are, significantly, "I'm lost."

Over the course of one long day and night, Melanie repeatedly crosses paths, at first by accident and eventually by design, with another lost soul, the older Ray (Rob Knighton). Taciturn where she is talkative, Ray is back in his hometown for the first time in years, on an underworld assignment to pursue a real fugitive while also hoping to pay his last respects to his estranged, recently deceased brother Steven. With the rest of his clothes torn to shreds by his vindictive wife, Ray has only a black funeral suit to wear – which makes him look like the 'mafia' man he is gradually realising himself to be. On meeting Steven's family for the first time, he is cast as his late brother in a play (entitled, like the film, *Everyone's Going to Die*) written by his young niece Laura (Madeline Duggan) for the therapy. Meanwhile Melanie wears a Charlie Chaplin costume and moustache at a fancy-dress party early on in the film, and ends up in a beaver outfit for an undignified waitressing job. Both are at a crossroads in their lives and identities, forced into roles they'd prefer to slough off – and in each other they perceive the potential for metamorphosis, if not quite the metempsychosis that Steven's Wiccan widow (Stirling Gallacher) believes in.

The feature debut of writing/directing collective 'Jones', *Everyone's Going to Die* keeps alluding to the kind of film that Ray might be expected to inhabit: he spends his downtime getting a tan like Ray Winstone's Gal in *Sexy Beast* (2000); he sits reading on his quarry's toilet, like John Travolta's doomed Vincent Vega in *Pulp Fiction* (1994); and he is even jokingly called 'Don Corleone' by Melanie. Yet this is a part that Ray is learning to reject, even as Melanie comes to realise that she too wants out of her prescribed life path. Accordingly, this quirky, charming, unlikely romance is more like a Richard Linklater *Before...* film than a gangster flick. For it is a transformative, 24-hour walk-and-talk, as Melanie and Ray, in flight respectively from the future and the past, must decide whether to sink or swim in a liminal setting of harbours, beaches and seashores that mirrors their transitional status. **S**

Going Clear: Scientology & the Prison of Belief

USA/United Kingdom 2015
Director: Alex Gibney

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Alex Gibney has in essence made a film version of Lawrence Wright's 2013 book *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood & the Prison of Belief*. Wright is on board as one of the producers and also figures prominently as one of the many interviewees; he appears whenever Gibney needs a perspective on Scientology from someone who has studied the movement but never signed up to it. (The book has not been published here but remains freely available in the US; the film is unlikely to be televised here because broadcasters cannot prevent it from being seen in Northern Ireland, which has not yet adopted the 2013 Defamation Act.) Like the book, the film has to work around the problem that Scientology's current leader David Miscavige refuses to give interviews. Wright and his editors and fact-checkers were granted one legally policed meeting with Scientology reps in 2010; Gibney has the huge advantage that he can use Scientology videos to show, for example, Miscavige breaking the news of founder L. Ron Hubbard's death to the faithful, glad-handing Tom Cruise, getting standing ovations at Scientology galas and exulting in his victory over the US tax authorities.

One question that hangs over the enterprise is: how much do you need to know about Hubbard and the early history of his project to understand how Scientology operates today? The film interviews many ex-Scientologists, some of them embittered by what they went through, and so necessarily focuses on recent operations and disputes. But it skims the history too. Gibney presents evidence that Hubbard misrepresented his war injuries, and can't resist noting Hubbard's post-war encounter with Aleister Crowley's occultism – which allows him to include not-very-relevant clips from Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*. But he spends little time on the years when Scientology was literally at sea, the period in the late 1960s when Hubbard named himself 'Commodore' of three refurbished boats and cruised the Mediterranean with an 'elite' corps of recruits. (Their mission was to sign up new paying customers at each port of call and to search – alas, in vain – for the buried treasure that Hubbard recalled hiding in previous lives.) Overall, the presentation of Scientology's first three decades is sketchy and impressionistic, although the archive footage of Hubbard – including one 'off-the-record' audio outtake from the BBC – is undeniably fascinating.


Mostly Gibney lets Wright and the ex-Scientologists do the talking, and makes his points by juxtaposing old and new footage. For example, he shows another BBC outtake (from *Panorama*, 2007) in which Mike Rinder flatly denies to John Sweeney that he was ever physically beaten by David Miscavige, and then cuts to his own interview with Rinder, who now says that he was actually assaulted by Miscavige "many, many times". Such contradictions pile up as Gibney launches into his two main set pieces: the clash with the IRS over Scientology's tax-exempt status, and the careful manoeuvres to keep Hollywood stars onside as public endorsers of Scientology. Both end in Scientology victories, celebrated



Within these walls: *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood & the Prison of Belief*

at rallies with discernible Nazi overtones, even if Miscavige's stage sets are inspired less by Nuremberg than by TV talent shows. No dispute is definitively resolved, and subtitles occasionally inform us that this or that lawyer denies that any such thing ever happened. One could conclude that neither the Scientologists nor the ex-Scientologists in the film lend any credibility to Hubbard's claims for Scientology's ability to maximise human potential.

It's best, obviously, to leave the arguments about veracity, taxes and criminal behaviour to be arbitrated in the courts. The film has a much wider relevance when it turns to the subtitle it inherits from Wright's book: 'The Prison of Belief'. Gibney himself doesn't note the parallels, but the film relates directly to contemporary studies of individuals who consciously turn their backs on

their own education and sign up to belief systems which subsequently impose cruel and unusual behaviour on them – such as Mori Tatsuya's *A* (1998), which gets inside the remnants of Japan's Aum Shinrikyo 'religion' after its leader Asahara ordered the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. The syndrome has clear relevance to major issues of the day, from 'Islamic State' recruitment to the militant atheist campaigns against all organised religions, and the way that adherents in various belief systems wholeheartedly submit to anything from self-abasement to wilful acts of aggression and destruction. As Paul Haggis says here, "Belief is a way of evading thinking for yourself." Alex Gibney's film, like Wright's book, is a useful contribution to what looks more and more like an urgent social priority: the push to discourage people from praising the chains that bind them. 

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Alex Gibney
Lawrence Wright
Kristen Vaurio
Written by
Alex Gibney
Based on the book *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the*

Prison of Belief by Lawrence Wright
Director of Photography
Sam Painter
Edited by
Andy Grieve
Original Music
Will Bates

Sound Recordists
David Mittyling
Mark Mandler
John Zecca

©GC Productions, LLC.
Production Companies
HBO Documentary

Films presents in association with Sky Atlantic a Jigsaw production
A film by Alex Gibney
Executive Producers
Chris Wilson
Sheila Nevins

Voices
Sherry Stringfield
Sara Northrup
Marina Zenovich
auditor

narrator
Alex Gibney

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Sky Atlantic

A documentary account (based on Lawrence Wright's book of the same name) of the origins, development, business practices and current policies of the self-styled Church of Scientology, founded by the pulp-sci-fi writer Lafayette Ron Hubbard in the early 1950s. The movement was initially marketed (under the name Dianetics) as a self-help tool, but adherents have to sign up to costly and protracted courses of 'auditing' as they climb 'the Bridge to Total Freedom' and are rewarded as they pass higher stages with parts of Hubbard's cosmic myth of humankind's spiritual origins in the depredations of the galactic tyrant Xenu. Scientology's battle to remain a tax-exempt religion in the US is recounted

in detail. Former paid-up Scientologists such as Hana Eltringham Whitfield and the Hollywood writer Paul Haggis discuss their experiences in the movement, and former ranking 'officers' like Mike Rinder, Marty Rathbun and Spanky Taylor discuss what they were required to do and how and why they left. The movement's current leader David Miscavige is not interviewed but seen in many Scientology videos, and the film highlights his determination to keep celebrity adherents like Tom Cruise and John Travolta onside. The film ends by surmising that Scientology's core membership has shrunk to around 50,000, but notes that the business remains extremely wealthy thanks to its property portfolios in the world's major cities.

Hippocrates

Director: Thomas Lilti
Certificate 15 102m 12s

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

Half social realism, half feelgood comedy, *Hippocrates* is a hospital drama with impeccable documentary credentials: director Thomas Lilti is also a practising doctor, and a number of scenes include real medical staff. At the same time the film is clearly structured, in Lilti's words, as "a young man's initiatory journey".

Hippocrates opens with the arrival at a Paris hospital of new intern Benjamin (Vincent Lacoste). He is the classic wet-behind-the-ears cocky young man whose confidence and half-baked idealism come from privilege: he is the son of head consultant Professor Barois (Jacques Gamblin). Soon, however, Benjamin comes up against real patients, material difficulties and his own blunders, all of which knock his naive arrogance down a peg or two. The best eye-opener is his encounter with Abdel (Reda Kateb), also a new recruit but from the other side of the social spectrum: Abdel is one of the 'foreign doctors' imported and exploited to fill the gaps in French hospitals. Although he is an experienced practitioner and Benjamin's superior in medical skills, his precarious situation – and his Algerian nationality – places him in a position of inferiority. The film charts the tensions and growing bond between the two men.

Lilti offers a fictionalised yet frighteningly plausible exploration of the French health system under increasing pressure: the clash between financial imperatives and patient care is rendered as a war of attrition in which medical personnel do their heroic best against the odds. Acute topical issues include how to deal with patients at the end of their lives and the blurred border between medicine and social work, represented by down-and-out alcoholic Monsieur Lemoine (Thierry Levaret). Comic relief comes from the boisterous doctors' humour of the interns. While the racist edge of this subculture is touched on in relation



Hippocratic oaf: Vincent Lacoste, Reda Kateb

to Abdel, who is ostracised for not drinking, its notorious misogyny is left out. Nor does the film reflect the growing place of women in the upper echelons of the French medical profession. In this respect the film validates the traditional vision of the man in a white coat as the ultimate figure of medical authority and reassurance.

Hippocrates is aware of its transnational generic identity: everyone here watches *House M.D.*, and a discussion between Benjamin and a colleague reflects the influence of *ER*. The film is rooted in the French experience, however, and it has been a hit at the domestic box office, thanks in no small measure to its inspired casting: former cult teen comic Lacoste is perfect as irritating rookie Benjamin, while the brilliant Kateb as Abdel confirms that he is one of the best French actors around today; dignified, but with a twinkle in his eye, he expresses economically yet forcefully his complex post-colonial predicament.

Hippocrates' simultaneously melodramatic and feelgood ending is a trifle clunky, nevertheless Lilti's film should be welcomed as a humorous, moving and realistic portrayal of a profession that, as Abdel puts it, is "not a job but a kind of spell". 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Agnes Vallee
Emmanuel Barraux

Written by
Thomas Lilti
Baya Kasmi
Julien Lilti
Pierre Chossion

Director of Photography
Nicolas Gaurin

Editor
Nicolas Gaurin
Production Designer
Philippe Van Herwijnen

Music
Alexandre Lier
Sylvain Ohrel
Nicolas Weil
Sound
François Guillaume
Raphael Sohler
Jean-Paul Hurier
Costume Designer
Cyril Fontaine

Production Companies
A 31 Juin Films
presentation
in co-production with
France 2 Cinéma with
the participation of

France Télévisions
. Canal+, Ciné+,
Centre National de
la Cinématographie
(CNC), Le Pacte
with the support of
Fonds Images de la
Diversité, Région
Ile-de-France, L'Angoa
in association with
Sofica Manon 3,
Palatine Étoile 10,
Palatine Étoile 11

Cast

Vincent Lacoste
Benjamin
Reda Kateb
Abdel
Jacques Gamblin
Professeur Barois
Marianne Denicourt
Denormandy
Félix Moati
Stéphane
Carole Franck
Myriam
Philippe Rebbo
Guy
Julie Brochen
Madame Lemoine
Jeanne Cellard
Madame Richard

Thierry Levaret
Monsieur Lemoine,
'Tsunami'

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

French theatrical title
Hippocrate

Paris, present day. Benjamin starts work as an intern in a hospital, in a unit headed by his father. At first confident and idealistic, Benjamin is soon confronted with the material and professional difficulties of working in an impoverished public hospital. His arrival coincides with that of Abdel, a qualified Algerian doctor who has to work as a locum in order to obtain a proper post in France. Abdel is professionally gifted but is isolated from the rowdy (and at times racist) culture of the young French interns. Though he helps Benjamin, the two repeatedly clash. Alcoholic patient Monsieur Lemoine dies while Benjamin is in charge, though the real culprit is lack of working equipment. Benjamin's father lies to the man's widow to conceal the slip-up. Abdel aims to relieve the suffering of Madame Richard, a terminally ill elderly patient, while Benjamin aligns himself with colleagues wanting to give her painful treatment, though he later sides with Abdel when the latter stops her being needlessly resuscitated. When Abdel is sanctioned for this decision, Benjamin is so outraged that he wants to give up medicine. He tells Madame Lemoine the truth about her husband's death, goes on a rampage in the hospital and falls (possibly on purpose) under a car. While he recovers, staff at the hospital confront the management about their working conditions and successfully insist on Abdel being reinstated. The film concludes with Benjamin starting work in another hospital.

Hot Pursuit

USA 2015
Director: Anne Fletcher
Certificate 12A 87m 23s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

Reese Witherspoon spends much of *Hot Pursuit* handcuffed to Sofia Vergara. It's an apt visual metaphor for the way the film keeps its gifted star constrained – it's hard to carry a movie when there's a loud squawking albatross around one's neck.

To be honest, there isn't too much going on in the film's opening scenes, which introduce Witherspoon's Officer Rose Cooper as a by-the-book striver desperate to transcend her quasi-secretarial role in the San Antonio police department. But Witherspoon is appealing enough that it doesn't much matter: twangy, short-statured and tightly wound, she seems to be channelling Holly Hunter in *Raising Arizona* (1987). There are worse comic role models – a film about a short cop bumping her head against her department's glass ceiling might even be enjoyable.

Where *Hot Pursuit* starts to get into trouble – indeed, begins treading into unbearability – is when Cooper commandeers a car at a crime scene and drives off with Daniella Riva, the drug lord's trophy wife/state witness played by Vergara, who doesn't bother trying to differentiate the character from her role in TV's *Modern Family*. This means a lot of air-siren whining in between over-scaled facial expressions, topped off with some of the most shameless full-body mugging this side of Jessica Rabbit (a more convincing cartoon bombshell). The one thing you have to give Vergara is that she's a hard worker. The problem is that director Anne Fletcher, a long-time choreographer who worked up a genuinely pleasing screwball rhythm between Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds in *The Proposal* (2009), doesn't find a way to let Witherspoon's finesse offset her co-star's more battering approach. Instead, it feels as if she's a hostage in her own star vehicle.

Hot Pursuit isn't offensively stupid by the standards of modern Hollywood comedies, and a few of its running gags are well executed: every few scenes, Cooper and Riva turn on the TV to hear their height and age being increasingly distorted by newscasters describing



Midday run: Sofia Vergara, Reese Witherspoon

The Human Centipede 3 (Final Sequence)

The Netherlands 2014
Director: Tom Six
Certificate 18 102m 38s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

It all started with a sado-surrealist idea and a man crazy enough to execute it to its bitter end. After joking with friends that the best way to punish a child molester was to stitch his mouth to the anus of a fat truck driver, Dutch filmmaker Tom Six (*Gay, Honeyz, I Love Dries*) turned this lowest of proposals into the high-concept *The Human Centipede* (2009), in which mad German scientist Dr Heiter (Dieter Laser) created an experimental chain of three captive patients, connected through a surgically merged digestive tract. In 2011's *The Human Centipede 2 (Full Sequence)* – the best segment in what was to become Six's own chain of three – disturbed and downtrodden loner Martin (Laurence R. Harvey) decided to recreate the “100 per cent medically accurate” operation of the first film (which he rewatches obsessively) on 12 abductees, despite his lack of surgical tools or medical experience. The film's reflexive preoccupation with the depraving influence of *The Human Centipede* on a perversely imitative viewer drew the ire of censors and moralist critics, and attracted a notoriety to the film that no conventional publicity campaign could buy.

Set in the George H.W. Bush Prison, deep in the Texan desert, *The Human Centipede 3 (Final Sequence)* returns to the scenario of crime and punishment that triggered Six's original idea, and brings things self-consciously full circle (it even posits a circular centipede, joined end to end). Laser is back, this time as Bill Boss, who out-sleazes a long cinematic ancestry of sadistic wardens from prison B flicks (Harvey is back too, as Boss's loyal accountant Dwight). Anti-Semitic and Islamophobic, a racist and rapist, a misogynist, mutilator and murderer, Boss treats his secretary Daisy (Bree Olson) as a sex slave and worse, eats imported clitorises for energy snacks (“Thank God for Africa! Thank God for female circumcision!”) and an inmate's testicles (removed with his own penknife) for lunch, gets “hard” (his word) at the submission of others (convicts and staff alike), and advocates medieval torture and a castration programme as methods of prisoner control.

Gurning, grimacing and SHOUTING his every contemptuous line, Laser offers up a truly demented performance as one of the most repellent characters ever to grace the screen –



Tale end: Dieter Laser

although he is also, like all the male leads in this series, a double for Six, even wearing the director's characteristic white suit and hat. When the actual Six shows up, offering advice on how the human-centipede concept from his first two films might be introduced to Boss's unruly prison population, even he is shocked by where – and how far – Boss takes his arthropodal exemplar (“Oh man, this is so wrong!”) and promptly throws up to camera.

The writer/director vomiting on the viewer – it is an apt metaphor for a film whose every excess is calculated to offend. Taste-free, tone-deaf, foul-mouthed (in more senses than one), overlong (just like the 300-person centipede), and utterly politically incorrect, this third and final instalment sees Six fully embracing the controversy that has become his currency and slowly, slowly excreting a film that is exactly what it is designed to be: something that no human being could possibly like. Six knows what he is doing, and has found the place where his fictions end and the dehumanising economies of America's penal system begin. Still, it is hard to square the paradoxical circle of a film that succeeds in all its aims precisely for being such objectionable crud. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Bruna Papandrea
Reese Witherspoon
Dana Fox
Written by
David Feeney
John Quaintance
Director of Photography
Oliver Stapleton
Editor
Priscilla Nedd
Friendly
Production Designer
Nelson Coates
Music
Christophe Beck
Production Sound Mixer
Steven C. Aaron
Costume Designer
Catherine Marie Thomas

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(MGM retained territories)
Production Companies
New Line Cinema
and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures
present a Foxy/
Pacific Standard
production
An Anne Fletcher film
Executive Producers
Jeff Waxman
Sofia Vergara
Luis Balaguer

Cast
Reese Witherspoon
Officer Rose Cooper
Sofia Vergara
Daniella Riva
Matthew Del Negro
Detective Hauser
Michael Mosley
Detective Dixon
Robert Kazinsky
Randy
Richard T. Jones
Detective Jackson
Benny Nieves
Jesus
Michael Ray
Escamilla
Angel

Joaquin Cosio
Vicente Cortez
John Carroll Lynch
Captain Emmett
Jim Gaffigan
Red
Mike Birbiglia
Steve

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros.
Pictures
International (UK)

San Antonio, Texas, present day. Officer Rose Cooper is in disgrace at her police department after accidentally tasing a frat boy. However, her commanding officer gives her an important assignment: she must help to escort Daniella Riva, wife of a cartel informant, to Dallas, where Riva will make a deposition. When her partner and the informant are suddenly killed, Rose flees the scene with Daniella, in the latter's car. Rose calls the police station, but when her colleagues arrive, she realises that they are the killers. Rose and Daniella go on the run with the crooked officers in pursuit. They steal a pickup truck, only to discover ex-con Randy sleeping in the back. He helps them get to an Indian casino and makes a pass at Rose. Daniella obtains a gun and tries to escape; she tells Rose that her luggage contains valuables paid for by money-laundering. The women once again narrowly escape from the crooked police officers, this time by jumping on a senior citizens' tour bus. Daniella knocks Rose out and goes to kill Cortez, the drug lord who had her husband murdered; Rose follows. They both arrive at Cortez's daughter's coming-of-age party, where Rose learns that her superior officer is also corrupt. Daniella corners Cortez but Rose stops her pulling the trigger. When Cortez goes for his own gun, Rose shoots him dead.

Daniella is sent to jail for obstruction of justice but is quickly released. She and Rose, now best friends, drive off, with Randy once again in the back seat.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Six Entertainment
Company
Ilona Six
Tom Six
Written by
Tom Six
Director of Photography
David Meadows
Editor
Nigel de Hond
Production Designer
Rodrigo Cabral
Music Composer
Misha Segal
Sound Recordist
Mike Guarino

©Six Entertainment
Company

Production Company
Six Entertainment
Company
Executive Producer
Ilona Six

Cast
Dieter Laser
Bill Boss
Laurence R. Harvey
Dwight Butler
Eric Roberts
Governor Hughes
Robert LaSardo
inmate 297
Tommy 'Tiny' Lister
inmate 178
Jay Tavare
inmate 346

Clayton Rohner
Doctor Jones
Bree Olsen
Daisy
Akihiro Kitamura
inmate 333
Bill Hutchens
inmate 488

[uncredited]
Tom Six
himself

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Eureka Entertainment

The George H.W. Bush Prison, the Texan desert, present day. Faced with unruly inmates, rising costs and a threat of dismissal from Governor Hughes, psychotic German warden Bill Boss decides to implement a regime of torture and mass castration to reinstate discipline. His accountant Dwight Butler pitches a more economic alternative – applying the model of Tom Six's two 'Human Centipede' films to the prison populace – but Boss is distracted with drinking and sexually abusing his secretary Daisy. When a castration experiment fails to pacify a prisoner, Butler brings in Six, and Boss is persuaded to go ahead with the 'human prison centipede', as a punishment, deterrent and money-saver. Dr Jones and his team stitch 300 prisoners together, mouth to anus, with a riot-injured Daisy in the middle. Hughes, horrified, fires Boss, who shoots Jones in anger. However, Hughes changes his mind about the scheme. Wanting to take the credit himself, Boss shoots Butler.

Inside Out

USA 2015
Director: Pete Docter
Certificate U 101m 41s

See Feature
on page 18

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The latest computer-animation feature from Disney Pixar, *Inside Out* is an epic journey across a fantastic landscape which also happens to be compellingly concerned with the quotidian experience of an 11-year-old girl. Because of her father's work, Riley (voiced by Kaitlyn Dias) is uprooted from her life in bright, clean, suburban Minneapolis and moved to a sinister-looking old house in San Francisco. The general trajectory of her displacement follows that of *Peanuts* creator Charles M. Schulz, who would always remember the trauma of being uprooted from Saint Paul, MN, to live for two years in dusty Needles, California, at the age of six, though there's also an autobiographical touch here – like Schulz, Pete Docter, who directed and co-wrote *Inside Out* as well as Pixar's *Up* (2009), is a Minnesota native. Moreover, in making the crux of his drama the inner life of a child who doesn't want to leave behind her familiar Midwest, Docter may be acknowledging no less a canonical work than Vincente Minnelli's *Meet Me in St Louis* (1944).

I don't mean to weigh down *Inside Out* with such hefty precedents, from which it is removed by the distance of decades and its state-of-the-art technological toolkit, only to say that it shows the same respect for the feelings of children, tempered with the wistful knowledge of adulthood, that they do. Docter's film doesn't have a single moment of wrenching climax on the level of 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas', twining the saccharine and sublime, but it is marked throughout by merry invention.

The basic premise – offering a backstage glimpse of a cabinet of personified emotions governing a person's actions – is not unheard of; when I was young, there was a lousy Fox sitcom called *Herman's Head* (1991-94), which functioned around essentially the same concept. Docter and his team, however, have gone so far as to create an entire ecosystem behind Riley's psyche. There are, for starters, the five colour-coded emotions, the most prominently featured being Joy (Amy Poehler), a sprightly pixie with a lemon-yellow complexion, and Sadness (Phyllis Smith), a stuffy-sounding Debbie Downer who looks a bit like Violet Beauregarde from *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971) in mid-blueberry-transformation phase. In a headquarters that's like a stratosphere-thrusting flight-control tower, these gremlins process Riley's incoming memories, appropriately colour-coded to signify the feeling that presided over the moment. The memories are visualised as lustrous spheres in which the dim reflection of the moment they contain can be seen playing on a loop; they are approximately the size of bowling balls, and rack up in the mission control in much the same way before being dispersed into long-term memory, a labyrinthine archive whose undulous shelves, seen from above, resemble the convoluted folds of the brain's surface.

The film's crisis – in which odd-couple Joy and Sadness find themselves stranded in long-term memory, leaving Lunatics Fear (Bill Hader), Disgust (Mindy Kaling) and Anger (Lewis Black) in charge of the asylum – is precipitated by unprecedented goings-on in mission control, as Sadness suddenly



Speak your mind: *Inside Out*

begins to pollute happy memories with her touch, turning them from yellow to blue. The experience this represents, in which a memory that was once a source of joy is newly cast in a melancholy light, is universally understood, and *Inside Out* finds a novel, concise, poignant way to visualise it – no small accomplishment, this. Every bit as indelible is a visit to an ash-heap of discarded and dying memories, burnt-out cast-offs which are seen to resolve into puffs of dust – a scene that feels closer to training-wheels Alain Resnais than the likes of *Minions*.

If this sounds a bit sad-sack, it should be added that *Inside Out* is a wildly entertaining movie, stuffed with ingenious little call-back gags (a chewing-gum jingle gets a good workout), a spritz of Borscht Belt spirit from chimeric imaginary friend Bing Bong (Richard Kind) and

various flights of visual invention, including the dungeons of the Subconscious, a soundstage where dreams are produced, and a detour through Abstract Thought which doubles as an abridged history of non-representational art. All that's missing, thankfully, is the material that's considered obligatory in a great deal of animated kids' fare – the lacklustre fart gags and pop-trash dance-offs and wwwHHHoooAAAhhh rollercoaster loop-the-loop action set pieces. There is a moral to the story, of course, but it's a good one as these things go, a gentle reprimand to a culture that monomaniacally insists on the primary importance of happiness too much for its own good. In a crowded field of entertainments that live in the mind only for the time they're before the eyes, here is a work destined for the long-term memory. 🍌

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jonas Rivera
Screenplay
Pete Docter
Meg Lefauve
Josh Cooley
Original Story
Pete Docter
Ronnie Del Carmen
Directors of Photography
Camera
Patrick Lin
Lighting
Kim White
Film Edited by
Kevin Nolting
Production Designer
Ralph Eggleston
Original Score
Composed by
Michael Giacchino
Sound Designer
Ren Klyce
Supervising Animators
Shawn Krause
Victor Navone

©Disney Enterprises, Inc./Pixar
Production

Companies
Disney presents
A Pixar Animation Studios film
Executive Producers
John Lasseter
Andrew Stanton

Voice Cast
Amy Poehler
Joy
Phyllis Smith
Sadness
Richard Kind
Bing Bong
Bill Hader
Fear
Lewis Black
Anger
Mindy Kaling
Disgust
Kaitlyn Dias
Riley
Diane Lane
mom
Kyle MacLachlan
dad
Paula Poundstone
Forgetter Paula
Dolby Atmos/

Datasat In Colour
[1.85:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

Minnesota, present day. A little girl, Riley, is born. Her early life is narrated by Joy, one of the five imps – personified, colour-coded emotions – who live inside her head. Along with Sadness, Fear, Disgust and Anger, Joy is stationed in a kind of mission control in charge of the creation and storage of appropriately colour-coded memory spheres, including 'core memories' forming the basis of Riley's personality.

When Riley is 11, she moves with her parents to San Francisco, where she finds it difficult to adjust. This creates a blue (sad) core memory – her first – and when Joy tries to intercept it, she and Sadness are ejected from mission control and stranded in the outer reaches of Riley's mental landscape. As Joy and Sadness try to make their way back to mission control, soliciting the help of Riley's long-forgotten imaginary friend Bing Bong, the remaining emotions prove incapable of governing Riley, steering her to a teary breakdown in front of her classmates and making her decide to run away. Joy breaks away from Sadness to get back to mission control, only to land in the dump of forgotten memories with Bing Bong. There, Joy finally realises the essential role played by sadness; escaping the pit thanks to Bing Bong's self-sacrifice, she reunites with Sadness and returns to mission control just in time to stop Riley running away. Joy and the others rebuild Riley's psyche using a mix of emotions.

Insidious Chapter 3

USA 2015
Director: Leigh Whannell
Certificate 15 97m 30s

Reviewed by Andrew Osmond

Insidious: Chapter 3 turns out to be a surprisingly good horror sequel and the most satisfying of the series so far. With the overly protracted storyline of the earlier films wrapped up in part two, the new film is a prequel, despite its misleading title. It serves up a different haunting, this time centred on a poignantly troubled teenage girl; and it also brings back (or introduces, chronologically speaking) Elise, the heroic psychic ghost-hunter played by Lin Shaye. Followers of the series have already seen the character killed off in the first *Insidious* (2010), then return as a ghost in *Insidious: Chapter 2* (2013). The prequel presents an Elise who is still alive but obsessed by mortality due to her husband's recent suicide and her foreknowledge of her own doom.

The first scene is uncharacteristically low-key for a teen-horror film and yet it's compellingly intense. The haggard, housebound Elise – very different from the strong character we remember – is visited by the haunted girl, Quinn (Stefanie Scott), who vainly begs Elise to help her contact her late mother. The meeting is played admirably straight, led not by tricky camerawork but by the performers taking the supernatural framework with complete – and emotionally painful – seriousness.

Soon afterwards, Quinn is struck down by a car (a genuine shock moment) and spends the rest of the film trapped in her bed or her wheelchair, tormented by a figure in a breathing mask who leaves slimy footprints on floors and walls. The ghost is handled with the playfulness we expect. Like many of its ilk, it performs like a stand-up comic, relying on timing and misdirection. Its routines are familiar but mostly pleasing, injecting life into standbys such as knocking on a wall or prowling around Quinn's oversized bed while the petrified girl cowers underneath. Amusingly, the ghost deliberately closes a glowing computer screen, just to cut off a light source that might spoil the horror mood. Nonetheless, the film is often sombre, paralleling Quinn's and Elise's grief and isolation, with both women shut in



Ghost mortem: Stefanie Scott

rooms and surrounded by shadows. Quinn's harried father and her would-be boyfriend are so ineffectual that the ghost doesn't even bother going after them as a means of getting at Quinn.

The geeky male spook-hunters from the previous films, played by Angus Sampson and Leigh Whannell, eventually show up. Their entrance in the first film disrupted the tone; here, their arrival comes as a relief. However, we realise that they haven't met Elise yet, and without her, both men are just frauds. It takes an all-woman force to combat the evil. The battle includes a crowd-pleasing fight for Elise in the darkened world of the dead, which gives the psychic (and the audience) a pre-emptive kickass revenge on the monster that killed her in the first *Insidious*.

Such cunning continuity, driven by the interplay of plotlines in different timeframes, was a feature of the grislier *Saw* horror series. Whannell wrote the first three *Saw* movies, as well as the *Insidious* films. *Insidious: Chapter 3* marks his directorial debut, taking over the series from his frequent collaborator James Wan, who helmed the recent *Furious 7*. Overall, Whannell strikes a good balance between emotionally interesting, performance-led drama and the more mechanical demands of a ghost-train Hollywood franchise. Ⓢ

Iris

USA 2014
Director: Albert Maysles

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Albert Maysles's last film is a typically deft exercise in subtle observation. If it appears at first glance to be a rather soporifically enamoured tribute to 93-year-old fashion icon Iris Apfel, that's because Iris herself is so well practised at eliciting adoration with her disarming candour and perfectly timed one-liners. It would take a genius to get underneath the surface of such a highly lacquered persona, yet that's what Maysles is able to do. But you have to pay attention.

Of course, *Iris* is a dream documentary subject: chatty, funny and extraordinary to look at. Maysles's previous foray into elderly eccentricity, 1975's *Grey Gardens*, played on the contrast between the deluded self-image of its star, impoverished socialite Edith Ewing Bouvier Beale, and the dilapidated reality captured by his camera; here, *Iris* is Maysles's knowing collaborator, bringing the idea of 'Iris' to him on a plate. Through him we can revel in her wildly eccentric personal style, as well as peeking into her vast collections of fascinating stuff. Iris has devoted her life, money and energy to finding and acquiring interesting pieces. Some of it is rare and antique, such as the expensively warehoused collection she drew on to service the wealthy clients who once hired her as an interior decorator. But many of her personal acquisitions sit on the line between kitsch and classic. Like her near-contemporary Andy Warhol, she has an eye for the grotesque menace that lurks under the plastered-on grin of mass-produced tat. When she dresses, she encases herself in clashing patterns and primary colours, and turns cheap (or not-so-cheap) ➔



Fashion queen: Iris Apfel

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jason Blum
Oren Peli
James Wan
Written by
Leigh Whannell
Based on characters created by Leigh Whannell
Director of Photography
Brian Pearson
Edited by
Tim Alverson

Production Designer
Jennifer Spence
Music
Joseph Bishara
Production Sound Mixer
Buck Robinson
Costume Designer
Ariyela Wald-Cohain
©EOne Films
Insidious 3 Limited
Production Companies

Focus Features presents in association with Stage 6 Films An Entertainment One presentation A Blumhouse production An Oren Peli production **Executive Producers**
Steven Schneider
Brian Kavanaugh-Jones

Charles Layton
Peter Schlessel
Lia Buman
Xavier Marchand

Cast
Dermot Mulroney
Sean Brenner
Stefanie Scott
Quinn Brenner
Angus Sampson
Tucker
Leigh Whannell

Specs
Lin Shaye
Elise Rainier
Hayley Kiyoko
Maggie
Steve Coulter
Carl
Tate Berney
Alex Brenner
Michael Reid
MacKay
man who can't breathe
Corbett Tuck

Danielle
Tom Fitzgerald
bride in black
Tom Gallop
Dr Henderson

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Distributor
E1 Films

Los Angeles, the recent past. Grieving for her dead husband, psychic Elise Rainier has become a recluse in her home. However, she's visited by teenage girl Quinn Brenner, who's trying to contact her dead mother. Elise warns Quinn that by doing so she may attract evil spirits. Soon afterwards, Quinn is hit by a car, leaving her with both legs broken. While recuperating in the family apartment, Quinn is tormented by a terrifying phantom of an old man in a breathing mask. As his attacks intensify,

Quinn's family call in 'ghost-hunters' Specs and Tucker. However, they turn out to be frauds, and are ineffectual when the ghost possesses Quinn's body.

Elise, who has regained her confidence, goes to Quinn's apartment. Knowing that the ghost has taken Quinn's soul to the netherworld, Elise travels there in spirit and fights for Quinn. In the end, however, Quinn is saved by the ghost of her mother. Afterwards, a revitalised Elise suggests to Specs and Tucker that they go into business together.

outsize bangles and necklaces into a provocative statement by piling them up into phantasmagorias of jangling excess.

Now that she and her husband Carl have sold their interiors business and retired, this personal style has created a new career for Iris. Her input is much in demand by fashion houses and department stores, though Maysles shrewdly records the patronising tone that characterises many of these encounters. A big store wants to put 'Iris' mannequins in its windows and has mocked up paper cut-out masks to stick on them, though in the end they plump for replicas of her signature outsize glasses instead. At a stroke, the larger-than-life Iris – who is standing right there – is reduced to a cipher, cut down to manageable proportions by the young women who only a moment ago were fawning around her.

Meanwhile, her own and her husband's increasing frailty haunts the film. "Whatever I have two of, one of them hurts," as Iris puts it. For the patronising youngsters, this is tediously unfabulous. When she mentions during one meeting that she has things on her mind, they scoff – what silly things could this kooky old bird have to worry about? She mutters something about health, and it's an awkward moment because her exasperation shows, and exasperation, like anxiety, is something she's not allowed to express; the iridescent jewel beetle is not supposed to have an interior life.

Maysles's film rescues Iris from this relentless exteriorisation, not by intruding on her secret thoughts but by presenting her as a performance artist whose practice is a deliberate and serious aesthetic choice rather than just a piece of batty eccentricity. Twentysomething fashionistas can ah-bless her all they like; Iris is a fully realised piece of work – as is Maysles's portrait of her. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Laura Coxson Rebekah Maysles Jennifer Ash Rudick	Editor Paul Lovelace Sound Mike Karas	Doreen Small
Camera Albert Maysles Nelson Walker III Sean Price Williams Nick Canfield Chris Dapkins	@Iris Apfel Film, LLC Production Companies Maysles Films, Inc. Executive Producer	In Colour [1.78:1] Distributor Dogwoof

A documentary following nonagenarian fashion legend Iris Apfel as she travels between her homes in New York and Palm Beach and deals with a constant flood of requests for personal appearances and collaborations with designers and retail outlets. Often accompanied by her beloved husband Carl, who celebrates his 100th birthday during the course of the film, Iris looks back on the business they set up together in the 1950s, Old World Weavers, which grew into a successful interior-design brand with commissions from high-end clients including the White House. A 2005 exhibition of Iris's personal clothing collection at New York's Metropolitan Museum helped to cement her reputation as a fashion-world celebrity.

As well as celebrating Iris's life and providing a detailed insight into her vast collections, the film touches on the vulnerabilities of old age – Iris is determined to maintain her hectic schedule despite undergoing hip surgery, but is concerned about Carl's increasing frailty. Ultimately, though, the pair are indefatigable enthusiasts for life.

Jurassic World

USA/Japan 2015
Director: Colin Trevorrow
Certificate 12A 124m 13s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

In *Jurassic Park*, dinosaurs were resurrected by way of their trapped-in-amber DNA, only to prove deceptively intelligent predators; in *Jurassic World*, they've become downright self-aware. *Jurassic World* is of a canny new breed of blockbusters, which is to say it understands that movies are to be evaluated for their served-on-a-platter issues as much as for their thrills, chills, spills etc. With this in mind, *Jurassic World* is liberally decorated with guidepost dialogue outlining its themes, quotes that flacks may excerpt in whole, though the most relevant to the film at hand is the familiar statement of the low-level functionary denying culpability: "C'mon guys, I just work here."

The third sequel to Steven Spielberg's 1993 blockbuster and the first since 2001, *Jurassic World* epitomises four-quadrant-striving boardroom-delegated moviemaking and the quagmire resulting from fan-expectation-driven supersizing that's endemic to sequel-making and 'rebooting'. What it exemplifies – the meddling of corporate suits in matters they don't understand and the perils of juicing up a perfectly good formula – is also its subject.

In the years since the *Jurassic* trilogy ended, a popular theme park offering the complete dinosaurs-al-fresco experience has emerged in the wilds of Costa Rica. After the initial razzle-dazzle has faded, 'Jurassic World' faces the same challenges that any successful business does: the need to offer fresh enticements to its customers. The latest attraction, whipped up in a gene-splice mix-and-match by Dr Henry Wu (B.D. Wong, the original film's only returning cast member), is the Verizon Wireless-sponsored Indominus rex, a super-predator whose attributes include T-rex girth, built-up biceps, chameleon camouflage and an ability to speak fluent velociraptor.

When the Indominus, more manmade thrill-killer than natural hunter, gets out of its pen, it falls to a small group of humans to save the park's panicking visitors. These include

ex-Navy man Owen (Chris Pratt), who has been training velociraptors for the military and is somehow horrified to discover from his superior (Vincent D'Onofrio) that they are intended for military purposes; Claire (Bryce Dallas Howard), a control-freak park executive whose micromanaging vigilance doesn't extend to her visiting nephews Zach and Gray (Nick Robinson and Ty Simpkins); and the gung-ho CEO of the multinational that owns the park (Irrfan Khan).

None of the characters, the product of four credited writers including director Colin Trevorrow, exhibits any kind of behavioural integrity – Zach, a smartphone-addled teen, turns into a grease-monkey as the plot demands it, while Claire performs just enough obligatory feats of bravery to form a defence when the inevitable discussions of the film's retrograde sexual politics come up.

Though perfunctory with its human players, *Jurassic World* is scrupulous in matters of set-up and punchline, following Chekhov's dictum on the mosasaur over the mantelpiece. The best that can be said of it is that it volleys pay-off after pay-off at the audience, like a hype man chucking souvenir T-shirts, all concluding in a showdown between the steroidal Indominus and an all-star roster of old-school, organic-certified dinos, proving once again that the natural ways are best and sending everyone for the exits with tickets punched.

Unlike its prequels, *Jurassic World* is overwhelmingly the product of CGI, and the sunny, panoramic shots of the park are marked by a cut-out flimsiness. Scenes in Dr Wu's lab are close to the palette of a *CSI: Miami* episode, while the movie's display-TV-at-a-big-box-store brightness is such that a prelude in some anonymous snow-covered suburb feels balmy. In a field of moviemaking that can usually be counted on for at least some moments of rude grandeur, *Jurassic World* is the ugliest piece of work that north of \$150 million dollars can buy. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Frank Marshall Music Michael Giacchino Production Sound Mixer Daniel Orlandi Costume Designer Stunt Co-ordinator Chris O'Hara Visual Effects & Animation Industrial Light & Magic Additional Visual Effects Image Engine Design Inc. Hybride Virtuos	Ghost VFX Base FX Visual Effects Level 256 VFX Avery FX @Universal Studios and Amblin Entertainment, Inc. and Legendary Pictures Productions, LLC Production Companies Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment present in association with Legendary Pictures a Colin Trevorrow film	Presented in association with Dentsu Inc./Fuji Television Network, Inc. Québec - Production Services Tax Credit Filmed with the assistance of the State of Hawaii production service tax credits Executive Producers Steven Spielberg Thomas Tull Cast Chris Pratt Owen Grady	Bryce Dallas Howard Claire Vincent D'Onofrio Hoskins Ty Simpkins Gray Nick Robinson Zach Jake Johnson Lowery Omar Sy Barry BD Wong Doctor Henry Wu Judy Greer Karen Irrfan Khan Simon Masrani Dolby Digital/	Datasat Digital Sound In Colour [2:1] Some screenings presented in 3D Distributor Universal Pictures International UK & Eire
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Costa Rica, present day. American teenager Zach and his younger brother Gray arrive at Jurassic World, a safari park populated by living dinosaurs, where their aunt Claire is an executive. Claire hands the boys into the care of her assistant so that she can continue overseeing the preparations for the unveiling of a new, genetically modified dinosaur, the Indominus rex. Claire consults ex-Navy man Owen about the safety of the facility holding the Indominus;

Owen is at the park working on a project to train velociraptors. While Owen is examining the pen, the Indominus breaks free and runs amok in the park. Claire and Owen track down Zach and Gray, who've gone missing. When several attempts to contain the Indominus fail, Owen's boss Hoskins orders that the velociraptors be let loose to hunt down the Indominus. Finally, humans, velociraptors and a freed Tyrannosaurus rex combine to kill the Indominus.

The Legend of Barney Thomson

Canada/United Kingdom/USA 2015
Director: Robert Carlyle

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Woe betide the Glaswegian barber with no patter. Aggrieved when he's told that his services are no longer required, taciturn Barney Thomson (Robert Carlyle) suddenly finds himself in the midst of a darkly comic caper after he accidentally kills his boss – an untimely slip, a pair of scissors, guess the rest – and his fortunes are thence entwined with the body count left by a serial killer on the loose across Scotland. Having so often effectively played the put-upon everyman driven to the edge, Carlyle isn't obvious casting as a Scots milquetoast in panic mode, and he rather overdoes the falsetto hysteria as steady-but-dull Barney is thrust beyond his comfort zone. Sadly, it's not the only misjudgement in a largely mirthless frolic: Ray Winstone's boorish Inspector Holdall and Emma Thompson's hummily ripe turn as Barney's screeching battleaxe of a mother are equally painful to watch; comic timing deserts all and sundry; and Carlyle's first-timer directorial gambit of plonking the cast in front of major Glasgow landmarks doesn't exactly help matters. *Legend* is somewhat overstating the case. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Holly Brydson
Richard Cowan
Brian Coffey
Produced by
John G. Lenic
Kaleena Kiff
Written by
Richard Cowan
Colin McLaren
Adapted for the screen by
Richard Cowan
Based on the book
The Long Midnight
of Barney Thomson
by Douglas Lindsay

Director of Photography

Fabian Wagner

Editor

Mike Banas
Production Designer
Ross Dempster

Original Score

Antony Genn
Martin Slattery

Production Sound Mixer

Alastair Mason
Costume Designer
Sharon Long

@Bridgeton Barber
Films Inc. and LM
Barney Thomson Ltd
Production

Companies

Icon Film
Distribution presents
in association with
Myriad Pictures,
Creative Scotland,
Téléfilm Canada,
Doy Films
Trinity Works
Entertainment
and Sigma Films
present a film by
Robert Carlyle
Produced with the
participation of
Westerkirk
Capital Inc.,
Creative Scotland,
Téléfilm Canada
Produced in
association with
The Movie Network,
Movie Central
Supported by the
National Lottery
through Creative
Scotland
With the
participation of
the Province of
British Columbia,
Canadian Film or
Video Production
Tax Credit
Executive Producers
Doug Apatow
Kirk D'Amico

Cast

Robert Carlyle
Barney Thomson
Emma Thompson
Cemolina Thomson
Ray Winstone
Detective Inspector
Holdall
Ashley Jensen
Detective Inspector
June Robertson
Martin Compston
Chris Porter
Kevin Guthrie
Detective Sergeant
Callum McPherson
Stephen McCole
Wullie Henderson
Samuel Robertson
Detective Sergeant
Sam Jobson
Brian Pettifer
Charlie Taylor
James Cosmo
James Henderson
Tom Courtenay
Chief
Superintendent
McManaman

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Icon Film
Distribution

Glasgow, the recent past. After taciturn barber Barney Thomson is fired by his boss Wullie, he accidentally kills him with his scissors. When Barney moves the corpse to his mother's council flat, he's spotted by his fairground hawker friend Charlie. A nervous Barney is subsequently questioned by police inspector Holdall, who suspects that Wullie is the latest victim of a serial killer. After Barney also accidentally kills co-worker Chris, he realises that his own mother is the serial killer. She has a fatal heart attack, but by now Holdall is convinced that Barney is the murderer. Holdall and rival inspector Robertson (tipped off by Charlie) shoot each other dead when they both arrive to arrest Barney. He goes free; rumours about his nefarious activities make his barber shop a popular attraction.

Maggie

USA/Switzerland 2014
Director: Henry Hobson
Certificate 15 94m 59s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

After 30-plus years of action-cinema stardom, the words 'Arnold Schwarzenegger' and 'zombie movie' inevitably conjure up certain expectations. These are swiftly upended by this emotionally restrained, tear-jerking tale of father-daughter loyalty in the face of the 'necro-ambulatory virus' infecting teenage heroine Maggie, whom Schwarzenegger's smalltime farmer Wade must confine to their home.

Distinctly indie in its bleached, dilapidated Dust Bowl looks, small-scale focus and moody introspection, the film is in deliberate opposition to the vast scale of *World War Z* and the classic zombie-movie template. From 1968's *Night of the Living Dead* to current TV series *The Walking Dead*, heroes have slain the slaving zombie hordes, but *Maggie* looks instead at the experience of zombification itself, from inside one family. Aiming to humanise a horror cliché, it's a plague-sufferer's story rather than the usual outgun-the-apocalypse splatterfest.

First-time director Henry Hobson goes for a realistic feel, treating the zombie outbreak in Wade's Midwest community as a containable if fearful epidemic. Yet unlike Manuel Carballo's *The Returned* (2013), with its retroviral drug therapy for the newly bitten, there's no hope of a cure for Maggie. Screenwriter John Scott 3 lays out his story as a dying teen tale with an unsettling twist, where dad and daughter must wrestle with her decay and deadliness – and his inevitable passage from father to foodstuff.

Much of the film's dramatic tension comes from the thoughtful if repetitive way it plays with and confounds Schwarzenegger's screen persona and the genre's expectations. Zombie attacks are few and far between, with Arnie wielding an axe against a pair of transmogrified neighbours more in sorrow than in anger. A cop denied access to Maggie warns an anxious Wade, "I'll be back." Ramping up the fear of 'the turn' with flashbacks to the cannibal chaos of



Arnold Schwarzenegger, Abigail Breslin

Maggie's brief quarantine or by lingering on the pitiable forced removal of her zombie friend Trent, the narrative is stuffed with dread. But its real interest is in how Wade and Maggie bond in the face of death, and how they struggle to save one another. Granted, when Wade physically battles the sheriffs to keep Maggie, there's a whiff of horror-movie tropes: authority versus liberty, the suggestion that Humans Are The Real Monsters. But, oddly for a zombie movie, there's no Romero-style political allegory here, no bigger picture.

Instead, the film offers us the inner view, sharing Maggie's terrified take on her suppurating limbs, or how her stepmother smells like steak to her. Abigail Breslin delivers all this with a bravura, believably teenage mix of aggression and self-pity. When the film lightens its sombre tone for a teen tailgate party straight out of *Friday Night Lights*, she infuses a fleeting zombie romance with gawky compassion. Opposite her, Schwarzenegger gives a grizzled, quietly stoical performance, full of damped-down pain and protectiveness. Watching him shed his first tears on film makes for a strange moment, possibly as historic as "Garbo laughs!" But despite the film's insistence on treating Wade and Maggie as joint protagonists, Schwarzenegger is outclassed here. Breslin is the beating heart of this otherwise gloomy movie, her performance finding poignant life inside the undead. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Colin Bates
Joey Tufaro
Matthew Baer
Bill Johnson
Ara Keshishian
Trevor Kaufman
Arnold
Schwarzenegger
Pierre-Ange Le Pogam
Written by
John Scott 3
Director of Photography
Lukas Ettlin
Editor
Jane Rizzo

Production Designer

Gabor Norman
Music
David Wingo
Production Sound Mixer
BJ Lehn Jr
Costume Designer
Claire Breaux
Visual Effects
A52
Hill Lake VFX
Bootmaker Films
Company M

@Maggie
Holdings, LLC

Production Companies

Lionsgate and
Grindstone
Entertainment
Group present
Goldstar Films and
Lotus Entertainment
present in association
with Silver Reel
A Goldstar Films
production
A Matt Baer Films
and Sly Predator
production
Executive Producers
Joely Richardson

Claudia Bluemhuber
Florian Dargel
Ed Cathell III
John Scott 3
Todd Trosclair
Ronnie R.E. Hebert
Barry Brooker
Stan Wertlieb

Cast

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Wade Vogel
Abigail Breslin
Maggie Vogel
Joely Richardson

Caroline
Douglas M. Griffin
Ray
J.D. Evermore
Holt
Rachel Whitman Groves
Bonnie
Jodie Moore
Dr Kaplan
Bryce Romero
Trent
Raeden Greer
Allie
Carsen Flowers
Molly

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Vertigo Films

The American Midwest, present day. Following the outbreak of a zombie plague, farmer Wade brings his newly infected teen daughter Maggie home from a quarantine centre. They are warned that she will 'turn' within eight weeks. Wade kills a zombie gas-station owner who attacks him. Maggie cuts off a rotting finger. Wade reluctantly kills zombie neighbours who menace him on his farmland. Maggie's body deteriorates over weeks. She is plagued by flashbacks to the chaotic zombie attacks at the quarantine centre. At a party, she kisses Trent, another teen zombie victim. When

his family has him forcibly quarantined by the police, Trent suggests that Maggie kill herself. Wade is warned by their doctor to be ready to shoot Maggie. Maggie can't stop herself eating a snared fox in the woods. Her stepmother Caroline asks for Maggie to be taken into quarantine but Wade refuses. Caroline flees the house. Wade fights off the sheriffs who come to take Maggie away. Maggie makes Wade promise to kill her. Fully developed into a zombie, Maggie bends over the sleeping Wade. She kisses him on the cheek before throwing herself off the house roof to her death.

Minions

USA/Japan 2015
Directors: Kyle Balda, Pierre Coffin
Certificate U 90m 55s

Reviewed by Andrew Osmond

An early screening of *Minions*, a computer cartoon spin-off from the *Despicable Me* films (2010 and 2013), was held at France's Annecy animation festival, where Chris Meledandri, the film's producer, was a guest. Meledandri recalled how his earlier animated hit *Ice Age* (2002) was carried by a sensationally popular two-minute trailer, a miniature cartoon in which a sabre-toothed squirrel was chased by glaciers and pratfalls down mountains. The minions have been similarly used in many promotional skits, such as one for Japan's Toho cinema chain in which they meet Godzilla.

Minions, *Ice Age* and many other feature cartoons struggle to square a circle – to make a feature that maintains the laughs and speed of the best short cartoons, exemplified by *Ice Age*'s trailer, Tex Avery's *Screwball Squirrel* (1944) or Robert Clampett's *The Great Piggy Bank Robbery* (1946, starring Daffy Duck). *Minions* is a better bid than most, paring away cartoon sentiment and wholesome messages in favour of quickfire, integrated gags. The minions in *Minions* are more loveable than the brashly abrasive Daffy Duck but they're still cruel and anarchic like the infants they resemble.

As viewers of the *Despicable Me* films know, the minions are baby-sized gibbering yellow beans. In their first two films, they served the comic supervillain Gru as he softened into a family man. The prequel *Minions* reduces Gru to a couple of cameos, and emphasises that minions *never* change. As a hilarious history overture shows, they have had one drive through the millennia: to find the worst bad guy around and serve him. We see a T-rex, a caveman and the Emperor Napoleon all meeting catastrophic comeuppances thanks to their little yellow 'helpers'.

Minions is co-directed by Pierre Coffin (who co-directed the *Despicable Me* films and voices the title characters), together with Kyle Balda. The film has three minions setting out to find a new master in the swinging 60s, cueing a volley of jokes about Nixon, Hendrix and *Hair* and a sly poke at the moon landing. Stumbling on a 'Villain Convention', they end up working for the maniacal (but immaculately coiffed) Scarlet Overkill, voiced by Sandra Bullock. Scarlet is shouty and lethal, pummelling



Happy to help: *Minions*

armies of macho villains and zooming round in a Dalek-like turbo-skirt, but the film treats her as a minion to the minions. It's they, not her, who get the endless heists, chases and squabbles (the squabbles are the funniest). They also get song-and-dance numbers and random business such as the world's worst football game and a *Mr Bean*-ish subplot with a teddy.

Despite all the action, and several funny one-scene characters, the film sags a bit when the action moves to a London of stock caricatures (no better or worse than those served up in *The Simpsons* or *Family Guy*). Not long after *A Royal Night Out*, we have another young Queen Elizabeth II, this time voiced as a dirty-fighting, hard-drinking tomboy by Jennifer Saunders. The plot turns on a left-field joke about King Arthur's sword in the stone, which the film presents as a real tourist attraction like Nelson's Column or Saint Paul's. It's the one bit of silliness in the film that may go *too* far for British viewers, though the joke may play well abroad.

In any case, things warm up again, with chandeliers falling in Westminster Abbey, an angry mob of motley villains and a monster-movie climax so innocently playful that it might have come from Britain's own Aardman Animations. The conventional cartoon story arcs of self-realisation and redemption are skipped, but any sacrifice in emotional resonance is compensated for by the pace and purity of the fun. **S**

Natural Resistance

France/USA/Italy 2014
Director: Jonathan Nossiter
Certificate: not submitted 83m

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Jonathan Nossiter's 2004 documentary *Mondovino* uncorked the debate about the globalisation-in-a-glass pressures of corporate capitalism on wine production. A contender for the Palme d'Or and then transformed into a ten-part TV series, it was always going to be a hard act to follow. But Nossiter, who is also a sommelier, can't tear himself away from the battle for a better bottle. Where his earlier documentary identified the big-business enemy and its tactics, this charming, rambling, footloose film embeds itself among four sets of Italian radical winemakers who represent the resistance. They are 'terroiristes', whose use of traditional methods and rejection of standardising chemical treatments have resulted in their wines being refused the all-important DOC accreditation. Nossiter trots behind them through their unsprayed vineyards as they wax lyrical about land, sunlight and soil, his camera lingering on their idyllic lifestyle as well as documenting their fierce advocacy of 'natural' wines.

It's a loose, conversational documentary, rooting its passionate, looping talk in the vignerons' fields and crowded lunch tables, as if establishing a 'terroir' flavour of its own. Unabashedly partisan, it makes no attempt to balance its arguments about the industrial pressures on Italian agriculture. Even *Mondovino* had the grace to allow wine guru Robert Parker to plead the case for a consumer-led, consistent product. These are defiant dispatches from the front line: we encounter Giovanna Tiezzi and her Tuscan traditionalism; one-time bankers and librarians in the Marches and Emilia rediscovering their family wineries; and Stefano Bellotti's agricultural philosophising in Piedmont. Their tales are best when they're showing and sipping as well as telling. We hear, for example, of a golden Verdicchio, its deep hue attesting to the extra-hot summer of its vintage, shunned by the DOC for its failure to attain the strictly regulated "pale yellow with green highlights".

Both observer and opinionated participant, Nossiter plays the cheerleader from behind the camera. Decrying Tuscany as a Disneyland (behind Giovanna's vines he points out Sting's neighbouring estate and Robert Zemeckis's holiday home), he happily urges his interviewees on in their denunciations. As if taking his lead from them, he's practising a kind of 'natural' filmmaking here, which layers clips from Hollywood silents and Italian classics into the discussions to illustrate his theory that wine heritage should be preserved just like movie heritage. But despite the heroic attempts by Cineteca di Bologna's Gian Luca Farinelli to make the comparison, the combination sometimes feels clumsy, a kind of cultural adulteration to pad out the interview footage. Conversely, Chiara Rapaccini's sharp-toothed animation *Un mondo buono*, poking fun at the fashion for factory-made 'country' foods, more than earns its inclusion.

The film is at its best when getting its hands dirty in the organic earth. Poet and premier biodynamic grower Stefano Bellotti gives a fascinating on-camera explanation of the superiority of his old and varied rootstock over modern cloned varieties. Seeing him crumble a handful of his dark, humus-rich

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Christopher Meledandri
Written by
Janet Healy
Brian Lynch
Edited by
Claire Doggson
Production/Character Design
Eric Guillon
Score
Heitor Pereira

Supervising Sound Editor
Dennis Leonard
Animation Directors
Bruno Dequier
Pierre Leduc

©Universal Studios
Production Company
Universal Pictures
presents a Chris Meledandri

production Presented in association with Dentsu Inc./Fuji Television Network, Inc.
Executive Producer
Chris Renaud

Voice Cast
Sandra Bullock
Scarlet Overkill

Jon Hamm
Herb Overkill
Michael Keaton
Walter Nelson
Allison Janney
Madge Nelson
Steve Coogan
Professor Flux/
tower guard
Geoffrey Rush
narrator
Pierre Coffin
Stuart/Bob/Kevin

Jennifer Saunders
the Queen
Steve Carell
young Gru
Pierre Coffin
the minions
Katy Mixon
Tina

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS/
Dolby Atmos
In Colour

[L661]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Eire

In 1968, three little yellow 'minions' named Kevin, Stuart and Bob seek a villain for their species to serve. They find Scarlet Overkill, who takes them to London and orders them to steal Queen Elizabeth's crown. A frantic attempted heist ends with Bob coming across the sword of King Arthur and pulling it from its stone. The British people crown Bob king, to Scarlet's fury. The minions try to make

Scarlet queen instead, but they almost flatten her (accidentally) at her coronation, which maddens her further. A battle ends with Kevin triggering a superweapon and turning into a giant, then defeating Scarlet. The minions return the crown to Queen Elizabeth and are honoured. Scarlet tries stealing the crown again but is foiled by a precocious boy villain, Gru, whom the minions hail their new master.

1971

USA 2013

Director: Johanna Hamilton



A vine romance: Corrado Dottori, Valeria Bochi

earth against the pale, compacted, detergent-smelling soil of his neighbour is worth any amount of lunch-table ranting about artisanal freedom. Bellotti, whose fluent anti-capitalist manifesto dominates the film, is allowed rather free-range discussions, decrying the sham that is 'Parma' ham or the nutritional wasteland of industrialised wheat crops. But he provides the big picture behind Nossiter's 'raw' wine revolutionaries: "There is nobody in society freer than farmers. So they are dangerous." 🍷

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Jonathan Nossiter Paula Prandini Giacomo Claudio Rossi Santiago Amigorena	Goatwork Films Production Companies A co-production of Les Films du Rat, Goatwork Films & Prodigy	(1954) <i>Marchese del Grillo/The Marquis of Grillo</i> (1981) <i>The Gold Rush</i> (1925) <i>Au hasard</i> <i>Balthazar</i> (1966)
Camera Jonathan Nossiter	With the participation of Cineteca di Bologna	In Colour [L78:1]
Editor Jonathan Nossiter	Film Extracts <i>Broken China</i> (1926)	Subtitles
Music Riccardo Amorese	<i>Max mon amour</i> (1986)	Distributor Soda Pictures
Production Sound Paula Prandini	<i>Fuoco!</i> (1968)	Not submitted for theatrical classification
Original Animation <i>Un mondo buono</i> directed/illustrated by Chiara Rapaccini, animation by Loic Sturani	<i>Roma città aperta/Rome Open City</i> (1945) <i>Comizi d'amore/Love Meetings</i> (1964)	Video certificate: 12 Running time: 82m 34s
©Les Films du Rat,	<i>Dial M for Murder</i>	

A documentary about natural winemaking in Italy. Director Jonathan Nossiter interviews four winemakers who use traditional methods: Corrado Dottori in Marches, Elena Pantaleoni in Emilia, Giovanna Tiezzi in Tuscany and the radical philosopher farmer Stefano Bellotti in Piedmont. Touring their vineyards and observing their lifestyles, Nossiter hears about their struggles to retain a heritage wine culture. The winemakers lunch together and discuss how the DOC accreditation system benefits industrial rather than artisanal wine production. They refuse to standardise their wine or alter it chemically.

Nossiter intercuts this footage with extracts from Hollywood silents and clips from key Italian films, suggesting that historic wines need to be preserved just as classic movies are. Chiara Rapaccini's short animation sequence 'Un mondo buono' highlights the fakery of mass-produced 'country' food. Gian Luca Farinelli of the Cineteca di Bologna talks about how film preservation conserves the past. Clips from 1960s documentaries and news features on Italian peasant life show changes in the country's agriculture. Bellotti compares his rich organic soil with a neighbour's dry, nutrient-light earth, and his antique grape stock with modern cloned varieties. He worries that official fines and industrialised farming will eventually drive 'natural' winemakers out of business.

Reviewed by Shelagh Rowan-Legg

Long before WikiLeaks blew the whistle on the activities of the US military and Edward Snowden exposed the extensive surveillance of ordinary American citizens, a political group sought to prove that J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI were abusing their enormous power. Johanna Hamilton's debut documentary *1971* details an incident that uncovered unprecedented illegal activity and severely damaged the bureau's reputation. More than 40 years on, it proves an engrossing and well-timed story, and one that remains all too relevant today.

In 1971, a group calling itself the Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI broke into the bureau's office in Media, Pennsylvania, stealing hundreds of files that showed the FBI to be illegally spying on civilians and organisations it considered dangerous. Many of these files were sent to the press, prompting a congressional investigation that led to the curtailment of the FBI's powers. The thieves went undiscovered – until now.

In *1971*, five members of the Citizens' Commission – John and Bonnie Raines, Bob Williamson, Bill Davidon and Keith Forsyth – discuss the reasons for their actions, how they committed the crime and got away with it, and their attitudes towards the FBI and the government, then and now. Hamilton frames them as intelligent, thoughtful and politically motivated individuals who realised the full implications of their actions and have little regret today. These are not old hippies who committed some random act of dissent and then forgot about it. They are professors, engineers, social workers, business coaches.

John and Bonnie Raines had young children at the time of the break-in; if caught, they risked going to jail for life. But, they argue, to have remained complacent would have allowed the FBI and the government to use any and all means necessary against those they viewed as 'un-American', without due process. The reasons for some members of the group speaking out for the first time now (Davidon was interviewed before his death in 2013) are directly related to the fact that the invasion of civil liberties by government agencies continues to threaten democracy in the US today.

Given Snowden's recent revelations, the extent of the FBI's criminal activities back in 1971 is perhaps not surprising. We hear of telephone operators and mailmen paid to spy on university professors and students; of FBI infiltrators, one of whom deliberately and proudly helped to end a marriage; of the surveillance of Dr Martin Luther King, and anonymous letters encouraging him to commit suicide.

Fittingly, Hamilton and co-writer/editor Gabriel Rhodes design the film as a kind of crime thriller – the re-enactment of the planning and execution of the burglary, accompanied by an appropriate score, could make a short film in itself – while the group's voiceover accounts of their break-in relate every important detail. The tension is held even as the reenactment is interspersed with archive news footage and interviews with historians and journalists. Betty Medsger was a reporter at the *Washington Post* at



Patriot games: Daniel S. Taylor

the time, and the first to write about the abuses of power revealed in the stolen files (she did so with the support of Katharine Graham, who, unlike other newspaper publishers, favoured the good of the public over the good of the FBI). Medsger, whose 2014 book on the burglary first revealed the thieves' identities, notes that, had the publication of these documents not set a precedent, it is possible that the Watergate scandal would never have seen the light of day.

The Patriot Act of 2001 restored many powers – and gave more – to government agencies to spy on American citizens. These powers are once again being questioned because an ordinary citizen took matters into his own hands, much like the Citizens' Commission did in Media. *1971* is a fascinating reminder of what happens when we don't watch the watchers, and how sometimes an 'illegal' act can expose a greater evil. 🍷

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Johanna Hamilton Marilyn Ness Katy Chevingny Written by Johanna Hamilton Gabriel Rhodes Cinematographer Interviews Kirsten Johnson <i>Recreations</i> Andreas Burgess Edited by Gabriel Rhodes Production Designer <i>Recreations Unit</i> Markus Kirschner Original Music Philip Sheppard Sound Judy Karp Mark Maloof John Zecca Nejc Poberaj Costume Designer <i>Recreations Unit</i> Eniola Dawodu	Pictures LLC Production Companies Maximum Pictures & Fork Films present in association with Big Mouth Productions, Motto Pictures, Ford Foundation JustFilms , Candescant Films a film by Johanna Hamilton Supported by IFP Produced in association with San Francisco Film Society Supported by a grant from the Sundance Documentary Film Program A co-production of Maximum Pictures LLC and the Independent Television Service (ITVS) with funding provided by the Corporation for	Public Broadcasting (CPB) Produced by Maximum Pictures LLC Executive Producers Julie Goldman Abigail E. Disney Gini Reticker Cast Peter Gregus Bill Lauren A. Kennedy Bonnie Jonathan Joel Brennan Bob Rich Graff John Daniel S. Taylor Keith In Colour [L78:1] Distributor DocHouse
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A documentary relating the story of a group of US activists who exposed illegal FBI activities in 1971. The group broke into a minor FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, and stole hundreds of files detailing surveillance and undercover infiltration of organisations and individuals deemed politically dangerous. The group sent key files to major newspapers; publication of the documents led to a congressional hearing and the curtailment of the FBI's powers. The people responsible for the burglary were never apprehended.

The Overnight

USA 2015
Director: Patrick Brice
Certificate 15 78m 42s

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

The scenario of a clash between the neurotically repressed and the neurotically bohemian has had a variety of cinematic outcomes: murder and madness in *Cul-De-Sac* (1966); the redrawing of moral boundaries in *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* (1969); existential crisis in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975); hot sex and artistic enlightenment in *The Dreamers* (2003).

Patrick Brice's comedic take on the set-up begins with standard sitcom indicators of marital staleness between thirtysomethings Alex (Adam Scott) and Emily (Taylor Schilling) – sex is unsatisfactory, child-rearing and work dominate, friends have fallen away since a move to a new city – combined with the anxiety over fitness for adulthood that has so preoccupied both indie and mainstream comedy over recent years. “I’m a grown-up person,” frets lonely househusband Alex. “Am I supposed to ask other grown-ups if they want to be friends?” Such simple uncertainty about how to connect with their peers leads the pair into an awkward social arrangement with people they instinctively find peculiar: overconfident Kurt (Jason Schwartzman) and his hippy-dippy wife Charlotte (Judith Godrèche). A dinner party runs on into a full night of drinking, weed-smoking, play and self-revelation, all enacted under the looming possibility of group sex.

The film's other source of narrative tension,

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Naomi Scott
Written by
Patrick Brice
Director of
Photography
John Guleserian
Editor
Chris Donlon
Production
Designer
Theresa Guleserian
Original Score
Julian Wass
Sound Mixer
Sean O'Malley

@Freebie, LLC
Production
Companies
Gettin' Rad
Productions
and the Duplass
Brothers present
Executive
Producers
Mark Duplass
Jay Duplass
Adam Scott

Cast
Judith Godrèche
Charlotte

Taylor Schilling
Emily
Jason
Schwartzman
Kurt
Adam Scott
Alex

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Metrodome
Distribution Ltd

Los Angeles, the present. Newly relocated from Seattle with their young son, buttoned-up couple Alex and Emily tentatively welcome social overtures from an eccentric fellow parent, Kurt. An evening visit to the home of Kurt and his French wife Charlotte initially seems to promise friendship; but with the children asleep and copious booze and weed ingested, their hosts' behaviour begins to make Alex and Emily feel uneasy. Kurt shows the couple a lactation fetish video featuring Charlotte, and his own close-up paintings of anuses. Charlotte takes Emily to a massage parlour where she masturbates a stranger. Alex experiences a revelation when the other couple encourage him to be accepting of his small penis, and is flattered by Charlotte's apparent sexual interest in him, but remains suspicious about Kurt's designs on Emily. Finally, after an argument about who is trying to seduce whom, Kurt and Charlotte explain that their sexual relationship is at a standstill and that they had hoped to enliven it through experimentation. Emily and Alex decide to leave but a group hug leads, finally, to the beginnings of an early-morning foursome. The children interrupt, curtailing it.

Sometime later, the four meet in the park. Kurt and Charlotte reveal that they are now in couple therapy.



Adam Scott, Jason Schwartzman

besides whether everyone is going to get it on, is whether Kurt and Charlotte are dangerously or appealingly odd, a conundrum about which it pretty much reverses its position scene after scene. This circling of the acceptable boundaries of sexual strangeness lacks the variety to stay funny; an hour into a 79-minute film, having been shown a lactation fetish video, a gallery of paintings of arseholes and a blatant incognito infidelity, it's boring and unconvincing for Alex and Emily to still be debating in hushed tones whether something 'weird' is going on.

Though it was apparently fully scripted, the film has the sprawling, hit-or-miss feel of something sourced from improv; though some awkwardness is perfectly appropriate to the context, even conversations between supposed intimates feel listless and stilted, with lumps of comedy incompletely absorbed. There's not enough of Emily and Alex on show – psychologically speaking, at least – for us to really care whether they bang their new friends or go home; and Kurt and Charlotte are too broad-strokes wacky for us to suddenly start caring about the underlying reasons for their sexual transgressions.

In the course of its meandering, the film does hit on an interesting and bold source of risqué, character-deepening material, in the form of Alex's crisis about the size of his penis. Though it might be an eternal source of cheap, cruel laughs, this is a matter rarely approached with anything approaching frankness or empathy: in a culture currently on high alert for the 'body shaming' of women, who's looking out for the small-dicked man? But with no one quite sure whether they're making a mean-spirited, daring satire on sexual hang-ups or a sincere examination of relationship change, *The Overnight* doesn't know what to do with either Alex's manhood or the feelings it uncovers, opting to dart uncertainly between sentimentality and mockery. And finally – when everyone has laid themselves bare and the goal of true honesty has implicitly been attained – what revelation surfaces? “I always wanted to go to Thailand. I hear they have beautiful beaches there.” ☹

Poltergeist

USA 2015
Director: Gil Kenan
Certificate 15 93m 32s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

In Tobe Hooper's *Poltergeist* (1982), the spectacle of a man peeling off his own cheeks was shocking and suggestive: the film's story of a nuclear family battling phantoms displaced by unscrupulous real-estate developers was an allegory about spick-and-span surfaces and the barely concealed horrors beneath. A suburban gothic signed – and rumoured to have been directed – by Steven Spielberg, *Poltergeist* has endured as a spirit-photography snapshot of the Reagan 80s and a minor genre classic.

Which is not to say that producing a new version is inherently a bad idea. Every era is haunted in its own way, and at first Gil Kenan's remake seems determined to reflect a 21st-century zeitgeist. The prosperous middle-class clan of Hooper's original have been replaced by a newly frugal family unit who move into their new, ectoplasm-infested digs only after an agent knocks a few zeros off the asking price; from the back seat of an SUV, sceptical high-schooler Kendra (Saxon Sharbino) scoffs, “I can see power lines.” She's a city kid none too pleased to be relocated to the planned-community boondocks.

Whatever contemporary resonance the film has dissipates early on, once it's apparent that Kenan and his screenwriter David Lindsay-Abaire have no idea what to do with the cash-strapped tetchiness of their characters. A dinner-party scene where downsized dad Eric (Sam Rockwell) basically begs his host for a job in between gulps of wine goes nowhere, and nor does the idea that his wife Amy (Rosemarie DeWitt) wants to be a writer as well as a stay-at-home mom. Instead of developing the people on screen, *Poltergeist* quickly sets its supernatural villains on them and never looks back. The excruciatingly slow build of Hooper's film was the best thing about it, whereas Kenan seems jumpy right from the start. The mid-film set piece in which all three of the family's kids – Kendra, younger brother Griffin (Kyle Catlett) and six-year-old Madison (Kennedi Clements) – are menaced by chunky CGI phantoms is noticeably haphazard.

For a film with such adroit and agile cinematography – by the gifted Javier Aguirresarobe, who shot *The Others* (2001) and *The Road* (2009) – *Poltergeist* is a shapeless and shuffling piece of work. The second half, which features Jane Adams and Jared Harris as



Phantom of the soap opera: Kennedi Clements

The Reunion

Sweden 2013
Director: Anna Odell

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The fiction-feature debut of the Swedish artist Anna Odell, *The Reunion* is the latest entry in a Scandinavian cinema of social gatherings gone horribly awry, of which Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration* (1998) is but one high-profile example. In her announced interest in the mechanisms of group psychology, Odell may be linked to her countryman Ruben Ostlund (*Force Majeure*), whose *Involuntary* (2008) began with and returned to an unfolding tragicomedy at a birthday gathering for a stubborn patriarch who insisted the party went on after he suffered a nasty wound from an errant firework.

Odell too is dealing with the operation of power dynamics in different group configurations – here revisiting her own school experience, and her perceived position on the bottom of the hierarchal pecking order. Her film has an unusual, brokeback structure, consisting of two sections. The first portion, which occupies about a third of the running time, visualises one Anna Odell attending her 20-year school reunion, disrupting the misty-eyed nostalgia and memories of class-wide camaraderie with her own recollections of ostracism and abuse, goading and persecuting the partygoers until she is dragged out kicking and screaming. The part is played by Odell herself, wide-eyed and wounded, and Anna is identified by her classmates as a well-known gallery artist, which Odell in fact is – she had something of a *succès de scandale* with her 2009 work *Unknown Woman 2009-349701*, in which she had herself admitted to a psychological institution after feigning a suicide attempt, an incident that's referenced in her film. *The Reunion*'s next section identifies what we have just seen as Odell's fictionalised staging of the reunion: Odell did not attend, and in fact was not even invited. In this second part, Odell attempts to contact her former classmates – the real

people we've just seen portrayed by actors – and asks them to watch and comment on her film.

This is ostensibly 'documentary' material, although the deception of the false-bottomed opening, as well as Odell's aesthetic choices in what follows – anticipatory camera placement and careful framing, bits of eavesdropping that suggest the connivance of the subjects – invite us to question the veracity of what we're seeing. What this amounts to is an elaborate conceptual framework on a piece of work that is itself quite rudimentary.

Watching Odell's film I found myself thinking of 'Reunion', an episode of Tina Fey's NBC sitcom *30 Rock*, in which Fey's Liz Lemon attends her high-school reunion, only to have her image of her younger self as a shy, quiet, bookish nerd upended by the testimony of her classmates: rather than remembering her as having been bullied, they recall that she was a sarcastic, nasty bully. *30 Rock* was primetime pop entertainment, but it went rather deeper into the vagaries of memory and the problems of self-identifying according to the teen movie's trope categories than does Odell's ostensibly difficult festival film, whose only ambiguities are of the hoary, bewhiskered, blurring-the-boundary-between-fiction-and-documentary sort.

Despite its conceptual trappings, *The Reunion* works according to a very familiar mollicoddling therapeutic template; it's a sermon on the sanctity of victimhood in which personal growth is a matter of 'overcoming' rather than hard self-examination, all ending in a graduation celebrated with aerial photography and cootchie-coo indie-pop. Only a valuation of saleable novelty over directorial bona fides can explain how such drivel gets distribution when, say, *Miss Julie*, Liv Ullmann's bruising encounter with Strindberg, has been pulled from a UK theatrical engagement. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Sam Raimi
Rob Tapert
Roy Lee
David Lindsay-Abaire
Based on the 1982 motion picture entitled *Poltergeist*
Screenplay by Steven Spielberg, Michael Grais, Mark Victor, Story by Steven Spielberg
Director of Photography
Javier Aguirresarobe

Edited by

Jeff Betancourt
Bob Murawski

Production Designer

Kalina Ivanov

Music

Marc Streitenfeld

Production Sound Mixer

Glen Gauthier

Costume Designer

Delphine White

Visual Effects

Soho VFX

BUF Canada

and Paris

Framestore

Shade VFX

MFX

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Fox Film Corporation

and Metro-Goldwyn-

Mayer Pictures Inc.

Production

Companies

Fox 2000 Pictures

and Metro-

Goldwyn-Mayer

Pictures present

A Ghost House

Pictures/Vertigo

Entertainment

production

Made in association

with TSG

Entertainment

With the

participation of the

Province of Ontario

Production Services

Tax Credit, the

Province of Ontario

Production Services

and Computer

Animation and

Special Effects

Tax Credits

Executive

Producers

J.R. Young

Audrey Chon

John Powers

Middleton

Becki Cross Trujillo

Cast

Sam Rockwell

Eric Bowen

Rosemarie DeWitt

Amy Bowen

Jared Harris

Carrigan Burke

Jane Adams

Dr Brooke Powell

Nicholas Braun

Boyd

Kennedi Clements

Madison Bowen

Kyle Catlett

Griffin Bowen

Susan Heyward

Sophie

Saxon Sharbino

Kendra Bowen

Karen Iwany

Mrs Stoller

Patrick Garrow

Mr Stoller

Dolby Digital

Colour by

Technicolor

[2.35:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Distributor

20th Century Fox

International (UK)

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Mathilde Dedye

Screenplay

Anna Odell

Director of Photography

Ragna Jorming

Editor

Kristin Grundström

Production

Designers

Madeleine Norling

Eva Torsvall

Sound Technicians

Martin Sandström

Jorge Olivares

Costumes

Madeleine Norling

Eva Torsvall

©French Quarter

Film AB

Production

Companies

French Quarter

Film presents in

co-production

with Sveriges

Television, Dagsljus

Filmequipment,

Nordisk Film Shortcut

Stockholm

Partly financed

by Kungliga

Konsthögskolan

With support from

Svenska Filminstitutet

A film by Anna Odell

Produced by French

Quarter Film AB

in co-production

with SVT, Dagsljus

Filmequipment

AB, Filmbasen,

Film Stockholm,

Filmregion

Stockholm-

Mälardalen, Nordisk

Film Shortcut

Stockholm

Executive Producer

Mattias Sandström

Cast

Anna Odell

Anna

Anders Berg

Anders

David Nordström

David

Erik Ehn

Erik

Fredrik Meyer

Fredrik

Kamila Benhamza

Camilla

Lena Mossegård

Lena

Malin Vulcano

Malle

Mikaela Ramel

Mikaela

Minna Treutiger

Minna

Niklas Engdahl

Niklas

Rikard Svensson

Rikard

Robert Fransson

Robban

Sara Persson

Sara

Ulf Stenberg

Ulf

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Soda Pictures

Swedish

theatrical title

Aterträffen

US, present day. Having been laid off by his employers, Eric takes his wife Amy and their three children, Kendra, Griffin and Madison, to a planned suburban community. Unbeknown to them, their new home has been built on an old cemetery; the real-estate developers have lied to their clients about relocating the bodies to another area. The family experience all kinds of paranormal activity. Madison is particularly affected: Griffin catches her having whispered conversations with an unseen presence. One night, Madison informs her parents and siblings that the ghosts have infiltrated the house. Eric and Amy go out the next night for dinner, leaving Kendra in charge, and Madison disappears, presumably into an alternate dimension. A paranormal research team determines that Madison is still inside the house, and that she has been taken by poltergeists – malevolent spirits. The group call in Carrigan Burke, a psychic who tells them that the spirits want to use Madison as a way of escaping purgatory. He sets up a rope leading into the other dimension; Griffin, who feels guilty about Madison being taken away, plunges into the other dimension and pulls her out. The family try to flee in their car but the ghosts become angry. Burke explains that he is the only one who can stop them. Burke goes back into the house, which blows up, though it's later revealed that he has survived. Eric and Amy start looking for a new house.

Sweden, present day. A group of former classmates gather after 20 years for a celebratory dinner. Anna Odell, a mousy brunette, arrives late, and is socially awkward. When toasts are made, Anna stands up to give a speech in which she recollects the bullying she suffered at the hands of her classmates. She continues to dredge up unhappy memories until she is forcefully removed from the venue.

What we have been watching is revealed to have been a staged drama, directed by and starring Anna, who is imagining what might have transpired had she attended, or been invited to, her school

reunion. Anna contacts her former classmates, inviting them to watch the movie, monitoring their reactions and then conversing with them about what they've seen and how they measure it against their own memories of their school experience. While some of them willingly meet with Anna, others – mostly those who were higher up in the school hierarchy – avoid her, leading her to track them down and corner them. After confronting the bully she remembers with most horror, Anna and her creative partner wander the corridors of her old school and survey the town from its roof.

Ruth & Alex

USA 2014

Director: Richard Loncraine

Certificate: not submitted 88m

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

It's not being ageist to note that this is an old person's movie, given that seemingly indefatigable British director Richard Loncraine and his two venerable leads all have screen careers going back a good four decades, and even screenwriter Charlie Peters's filmography stretches as far as 1981's Burt Reynolds frolic *Paternity*. For a story about the challenges of ageing, it's somehow appropriate that the subject is familiar territory for the key talent involved.

The film explores couple Morgan Freeman and Diane Keaton's mixed feelings at the prospect of moving from the Brooklyn apartment they've called home for 40 years. The original US title, *5 Flights Up*, puts its finger on the problem, since the pair have to face up to the fact that they may not manage the stairs for too much longer. With so much personal history attached to the place (and flashbacks hint that their mixed-race marriage was a contentious issue in its day) but no firm idea of where they might go next, they're in a quandary over how to adapt to the change they know is necessary. It's a strong enough dilemma to keep the drama ticking over, the two stars are sufficiently assured to make it play, and Loncraine, as seen in earlier offerings such as *The Missionary* (1982) with Michael Palin and the Renée Zellweger vehicle *My One and Only* (2009), handles easygoing niceness pretty well.

Would that the film had more confidence in its own beating heart. Instead it stacks up the story odds with a host of bracingly aggressive house-hunters and vendors, puts the central duo at the mercy of Cynthia Nixon's enthusiastically pushy estate agent and makes a blatant effort to massage narrative tension by crosscutting to the fortunes of a supposed fugitive 'terrorist' – with a Muslim name, of course – whose existence seems to matter only as far as his potential impact on Brooklyn property values. Add an ailing ten-year-old mongrel whose health prospects rise and fall according to the needs of the story arc at any given moment and yet another rich-



Age concern: Diane Keaton, Morgan Freeman

as-molasses voiceover from Freeman (not only reaffirming what's patently obvious from the action but also suggesting that his perspective matters rather more than his dear wife's) and you have an exercise in contrivance that seems creakily old-fashioned. Were it not for the gentrification of Brooklyn facilitating the plot, and a smidgen of post-9/11 unease underpinning it, we might be watching some ploddy relic from the days of Jack Lemmon and Sandy Dennis.

Ira Sachs's recent *Love Is Strange* showed that it is possible to encapsulate long-term relationships and New York property without taking the hokum route, and while Loncraine's offering is never anything less than smoothly watchable, with Freeman and Keaton gliding along on cruise control, you would hope that a film clearly intended for a more mature audience would at least grant those viewers a tad more taste and intelligence. **S**

The Salt of the Earth

France/Italy/Brazil 2014

Directors: Wim Wenders, Juliano Ribeiro Salgado

Certificate 12A 109m 59s

Reviewed by Sukhdev Sandhu

This biographical portrait of the celebrated Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado is a strange collaboration between Wim Wenders and the artist's eldest son Juliano. Describing how he got to know Salgado's work, Wenders is less eloquent than he might be: "So one thing I knew already about this Sebastião Salgado: he really cared about people. That meant a lot in my book." Juliano is a less audible presence; he admits that his desire to go to the Arctic on a shoot with his father was partly because he didn't see much of him when he was growing up.

Salgado himself – mostly shot in moody black-and-white – comes across as rueful, harrowed even. He's certainly less jaunty than that other continent-skipping chronicler of modern society, Edward Burtynsky, whose photographic practice was explored in Jennifer Baichwal's *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006) and *Watermark* (2013). Salgado's pictures of Brazil's Serra Pelada mine have often been seen as Brueghelian depictions of the wretched of the earth; but he points out that many of those toiling were graduates and urban professionals lured by the same gold fever that throughout history has driven millions of men to up sticks and graft in woeful conditions. His accounts of human suffering are those of an eyewitness rather than a theorist: cholera, he says, gives you diarrhoea, makes you lose 12 litres of water a day and kills you within two to three days.

Critics who claim that Salgado's work emphasises aesthetics and formal composition over politics may find further ammunition in some of the photographer's comments. Of Kuwait at the end of the Gulf War he remarks, "It was like working in a huge theatre... A giant stage... It broke my heart to abandon this vast spectacle." He exclaims of a clump of walrus that he photographed, "It was like being in Dante's Inferno with those tusks protruding!" These scenes of suffering seem to elicit in him reverence as much as revulsion. "Here," he says of Serra Pelada, "in a split second I saw unfolding before me the history of mankind. The building of the pyramids. The Tower of Babel. The mines of King Solomon."

Perhaps what's missing in Salgado's work is noise: "People would approach my camera," he says of his time among the Mixe farmers in Mexico's Oaxaca state, "I had the impression I was more of a sound recorder." But little of their acoustic identity percolates through the grace and stillness of the images.

The directors do well to highlight the critical role that Lélia Wanick Salgado has played in shaping her husband's career. After marrying at a young age, they studied together in Paris. She bought the camera that set in motion his decision to abandon economics for photography; she also showed his early pictures to magazines editors and agencies. Later she held things together at home when their second son Rodrigo was diagnosed with Down's syndrome and when Sebastião was abroad on extended shoots. Given how long and far-flung Salgado's projects are, it would also have been enlightening to learn more about how these are funded, how he balances his social concerns with his financial outgoings, and why he chose

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Lori McCreary
Producers
Curtis Burch
Tracy Mercer
Charlie Peters
Screenplay
Charlie Peters
Based on the novel
Heroic Measures
by Jill Ciment
Director of Photography
Jonathan Freeman
Edited by
Andrew Marcus

Production Designer
Brian Morris
Music
David Newman
Production Mixer
Thomas Varga
Costume Designer
Arjun Bhasin

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Production Companies
Myriad Pictures
presents in
association with Manu
Propria Entertainment

a Revelations
Entertainment,
Latitude production
Executive Producers
Morgan Freeman
Sam Hoffman
Richard Toussaint
Wade Barker
Gary Ellis
Bob Gass
Judy Burch Gass

Cast
Morgan Freeman
Alex Carver

Diane Keaton
Ruth Carver
Cynthia Nixon
Lily Portman
Claire van der Boom
young Ruth
Korey Jackson
young Alex
Carrie Preston
Miriam Carswell
Sterling Jerins
Zoë
Josh Pais
Jackson
Liza J. Bennett
Mrs Vincent

Maddie Corman
friendly lady
Gary Wilmes
Mr Vincent
Miriam Shor
cool lady
Michael Cristofer
Larry

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Signature
Entertainment

Not submitted
for theatrical
classification
Video certificate: 12
Running time:
88m 20s

American
theatrical title
5 Flights Up

Brooklyn, present day. Married couple Ruth and Alex have been living in their fifth-floor apartment for 40 years, but the stairs are proving difficult for them and their dog Dorothy as they all get older, so they are reluctantly selling up. Guided by bustling real-estate agent Lily, they open up their home for viewings, though there's disruption in the neighbourhood after an oil tanker crashes on the Williamsburg Bridge and a suspected terrorist goes on the run. Dorothy becomes ill and has to be left at the vet's for costly treatment. Alex is having misgivings about the move; nevertheless,

he and Ruth view an apartment with a lift and put in an offer. Lily is aggrieved that they didn't consult her but now forces the pace in a bidding war to secure the best price on their own property. Ruth and Alex return to the other apartment with a deposit cheque but are given a frosty reception by the vendors. Seeing on the TV news that the apprehended 'terrorist' is just a frightened young man, Alex decides that he and Ruth have been through too much unnecessary fuss and refuses to sign the cheque. With Dorothy restored to health, they stay where they are, at least for a while.

San Andreas

USA 2015

Director: Brad Peyton

Certificate 12A 114m 18s

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

It's the paradox of the contemporary disaster film: the less you know about science, the more likely you are to enjoy the CGI destruction. Despite that, the screenwriter of *San Andreas* chooses to include a surfeit of dull, pseudo-science exposition that cuts into the time devoted to explosions (and heartrending death). Thankfully, the perpetual salvation from *San Andreas*'s rapturously stupid dialogue is Dwayne Johnson as Raymond Gaines, a recently divorced Los Angeles Fire Department helicopter rescue pilot and Iraq War veteran. Though the emotions Johnson is called on to act out are necessarily primal or just variations on keeping calm while caught between a rock (sorry) and a hard place, he gives every line reading and twist of his mouth undeniable warmth and complexity. Save for the additional 50lbs of muscle mass, his airborne performance begs comparison to Cary Grant's in *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939).

Given that level of charisma, it's difficult to understand why Gaines and his wife Emma (Carla Gugino) ever called it quits. This sheer magnetism leaves the door open for Ioan Gruffudd to become Ray's perfect foil as Daniel, Emma's new high-rise-developer boyfriend; à la *Force Majeure* (or any of the multiple sociological studies that film was based on), Daniel seems perfectly nice but bolts at the first sign of danger, leaving Emma and Ray's daughter Blake (Alexandra Daddario) trapped in an underground car park after the first quake. (Daniel's dastardly true self is further embellished when he pulls a man out from a position of safety in order to take his place; this poor soul is almost immediately killed by debris.)

After being betrayed by this craven stereotype of masculinity, Blake is rescued by another: Ben (Hugo Johnstone-Burt), an Englishman so frightfully awkward that Hugh Grant in the 1990s would feel compelled to tell him to grow a pair. Thankfully, Ben is accompanied by his kid brother Ollie (Art Parkinson), who – presumably because he's spent fewer years at public school and is therefore less emotionally damaged – says all the things Ben can't, like, "You're quite beautiful!" Intended as light comic relief, the trio never quite get their chemistry right, and we're left with a series of limp exchanges between these kooky opposites. However, in solo scenes or while interacting with her (genetically implausible) parents, Daddario proves that she's more than eye candy, even if that's all her character was meant to be.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, *San Andreas*'s most disappointing moments come from its most pedigreed actor – while Johnson and company are trying to prove something,



Fault lines: Dwayne Johnson, Carla Gugino



Lens flair: Wim Wenders, Sebastião Salgado


to leave the Magnum agency in the early 1990s.

The images that Salgado took during the mid-1990s – in the killing fields of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia – are the hardest for him to talk about. Churches and schools become abattoirs. Over and over again, individuals, villages and entire cities are uprooted, forced to trek hundreds of miles to escape genocide, reduced (if they're lucky) to skin and bones. "You felt the whole planet was covered with refugee tents," says a pained Salgado. (It's difficult – and also absurd – to remember that this was taking place at the same time that conservative ideologues such as Francis Fukuyama had declared the end of history, and when many professors in western academia were more interested in 'culture wars' than in civil wars.)

It's easy to understand Salgado's increasing pessimism about mankind. "We are a ferocious animal. We humans are terrible animals. Here in Europe, in Africa, in South America, everywhere. We are extremely violent." By the end of the 20th century, Salgado had witnessed, heard and smelled horrors that, even now, he

struggles to put into words. After he left Africa, he reflects, "I no longer believed in anything, in any salvation for the human species. You couldn't survive such a thing. No one deserved to live."

The film ends with an extended introduction to Salgado's latest project, 'Genesis'. Here, abandoning the darkness of his best-known work, he travels across the world capturing images of sea creatures, jungle communities, newly discovered Amazonian tribes. It's described as his magnum opus, a love letter to the planet. In place of rupture, breakdown and negation, here he offers stories of growth, continuity, deep time.

Inspired by the successful reversal of the desertification of a cattle ranch his family owned – 2.5 million trees have been planted, water sources flow again, all manner of wildlife, including jaguars, has returned – he seeks to show that "the destruction of nature can be reversed". Though it's expressed in the tone of a pitch for a foundation grant, it's a lovely thought. And after what he's lived through, it's hard to begrudge Salgado any utopianism he's managed to cultivate. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

David Rosier
Written by
Juliano Ribeiro Salgado

Wim Wenders
David Rosier

Directors of Photography

Hugo Barbier
Juliano Ribeiro Salgado

Editors

Maxine Goedicke

Rob Myers

Original Soundtrack

Composed by

Laurent Petitgand

Sound Mixer

Régis Muller

©Decia Films,

Amazonas Images

Production

Companies

Decia Films present

a film co-produced

by Decia Films,

Amazonas Images,

Fondazione Solares

delle Arti with the

support of Le Region

Île-de-France, Les

Amis de la Maison

Européenne de la

Photographie

with the participation

of Social Service of

Commerce - SESC,

Espirito Santo State,

Department of

Cultural affairs, Brazil

a film by Wim

Wenders and Juliano

Ribeiro Salgado

with the support

of Centre national

du cinéma et de

l'image animée

with the participation

of Sesc Record

Label, Regional

Administration in

the state of São

Paulo, Espirito Santo

State, Department

of Cultural Affairs,

Brazil, Minas Gerais

State, Department

of Cultural Affairs, Brazil

Executive Producers

Wim Wenders

Dolby Digital

Colour and

Black & White

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Curzon Film World

French theatrical title

Le sel de la terre

A documentary portrait of the celebrated Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado, directed by the German filmmaker Wim Wenders with Salgado's son Juliano Ribeiro Salgado. In voiceover, Wenders recounts his discovery of Salgado's work and their subsequent friendship. Salgado talks about his upbringing in Brazil, his decade-long stay

in France from the late 1960s onwards and his decision to give up his job as an economist to become a social photographer. He discusses key projects – such as 'Other Americas', 'Sahel: The End of the Road', 'Workers', 'Exodus' and 'Genesis' – and describes how he has documented war, famine and exploitation and chronicled threatened ecologies.

➔ Paul Giamatti makes no attempt to hide the fact that he's slumming it. Surrounded by a cabal of his Caltech graduate assistants, Giamatti's Professor Lawrence Hayes is totally separated from the action, save for an early quake on the Hoover Dam that swallows up his research partner but doesn't involve any of the other main players. Instead, his appearances are limited to delivering panicked safety mandates and Richter-scale updates to a television crew, another reminder of the 'burden of proof' all blockbusters now bear. While putting him into a speedboat next to Johnson might not have made *San Andreas* more riveting, it would, at the very least, have made it more fun to witness. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Beau Flynn
Screenplay Carlton Cuse
Story Andre Fabrizio
 Jeremy Passmore
Director of Photography Steve Yedlin
Film Editor Bob Ducsay
Production Designer Barry Chusid
Music Andrew Lockington
Sound Mixer Guntis Sics
Costumes Designed by Wendy Chuck
Stunt Coordinators Allan Poppleton
 Bob Brown
 Keith Campbell
 Jon Devore
 Paul Jennings
Visual Effects Scanline VFX
 [hy*drau*ix]
 Method Studios
 Cinesite
 Atomic Fiction
 Soho VFX
 Image Engine
 MPC
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 Village Roadshow
 Films North America

Inc. and RatPac-Dune Entertainment LLC (US, Canada, Bahamas & Bermuda)
 ©Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., Village Roadshow Films (BV) Limited and RatPac-Dune Entertainment LLC (all other territories)
Production Companies New Line Cinema presents in association with Village Roadshow Pictures, RatPac-Dune Entertainment an FPC production
 A Brad Peyton film
 Filmed with the assistance of the Australian Government, Screen Queensland
 Québec Production Services Tax Credit
 With the participation of the Canadian Film or Video Production Services Tax Credit, the Province of British Columbia
 Production Services Tax Credit
Executive Producers Richard Brener
 Samuel J. Brown
 Michael Disco

Toby Emmerich
 Rob Cowan
 Tripp Vinson
 Bruce Berman

Cast
Dwayne Johnson
 Raymond Gaines, 'Ray'
Carla Gugino
 Emma
Alexandra Daddario
 Blake
Ioan Gruffudd
 Daniel Riddick
Archie Panjabi
 Serena
Hugo Johnstone-Burt
 Ben
Art Parkinson
 Ollie
Paul Giamatti
 Dr Lawrence Hayes
Will Yun Lee
 Dr Kim Park
Kylie Minogue
 Susan Riddick

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor Warner Bros. Pictures International (UK)

Southern California, present day. California Institute of Technology professor Lawrence Hayes and his colleague Dr Kim Park visit the Hoover Dam to test their predictive model of seismic activity; a sudden earthquake destroys the dam. Ray Gaines, a Los Angeles Fire Department helicopter rescue pilot, visits his daughter Blake, ex-wife Emma and Emma's new boyfriend Daniel. Ray has to help at the Hoover Dam, so he can't go to San Francisco with Blake; Daniel agrees to accompany her instead. When an earthquake hits LA, Ray turns back to save Emma. An earthquake also hits San Francisco, and Daniel abandons Blake after she becomes trapped. Ben, a young man interviewing for a job with Daniel, and Ollie, his little brother, rescue her. Ray and Emma fly to San Francisco to help Blake but their helicopter breaks down in Bakersfield. They find another small plane and fly to San Francisco, but run out of fuel. They transfer to a speedboat to search for Blake. A tsunami destroys what's left of San Francisco. Blake, Ben and Ollie find shelter in a high-rise building. Blake almost drowns but Ray revives her. They escape to safety in Marin County.

Search Party

Director: Scot Armstrong
 Certificate 15 93m 9s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

There were some terrible things in *The Hangover* (2009), but some of it was terribly funny. The sequel was all terrible, though, and *Search Party*, the directorial debut of its screenwriter Scot Armstrong, is even worse – a *Hangover* knock-off with all the crass jokes and none of the good ones, on a visibly low budget that makes for some underwhelming set pieces. A sequence that's meant to involve an enraged magician firing flaming crossbow bolts at the protagonists' car whimpers out with what look like Swan Vestas being tossed on to the roof.

In a combined example of poor comedy and inept direction, after Evan (Adam Pally) inappropriately 'compliments' his co-worker Elizabeth (Alison Brie) on her "taut" skirt and she has walked away, his roommate Jason (T.J. Miller), following her with his eyes, yells across the office that he agrees – it is a "taut" skirt. Not that it would have made this irredeemable scene funnier, but her skirt is barely visible from the point of view we are given (and I doubt any subversion of the male gaze is intended here). Brie (Trudy in *Mad Men*) and Miller (Bachman in *Silicon Valley*) are both talented comic performers who deserve better than this, and get it on television. **S**



Middleditch, Woodward, Pally

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Paul Brooks
 Scot Armstrong
 Ravi Nandan
 Ori Marmur
Screenplay Andrew Waller
 Mike Gagerman
 Scot Armstrong
Director of Photography Tim Orr
Edited by Sam Seig
Production Designer Toby Corbett
Music Craig Wedren
Production Sound Mixer Steve C. Aaron

Costume Designer Abby O'Sullivan

Production Companies Universal Pictures and Gold Circle Entertainment present a Gold Circle Entertainment, American Work, Original Film production
 A Scot Armstrong film
Executive Producer Scott Niemeyer

Adam Pally
 Evan
Thomas Middleditch
 Nardo
Alison Brie
 Elizabeth
Shannon Woodward
 Tracy
Krysten Ritter
 Christy

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Universal Pictures International UK & Eire

Cast
 T.J. Miller
 Jason

Los Angeles, the present. After his roommate Jason ruins his wedding, Nardo travels to Mexico in pursuit of his fiancée Tracy, who has gone on honeymoon alone. Car-jacked and left naked, he phones Jason to request help. Jason forces their other roommate Evan to accompany him to Mexico, even though he has an important business meeting the next morning. After a series of capers, Nardo escapes from Mexican cocaine wholesalers and proposes again to Tracy. Evan is given a promotion and reveals his love for his work colleague Elizabeth.

Song of the Sea

Ireland/Luxembourg/Belgium/France 2014
 Director: Tomm Moore
 Certificate PG 93m 37s

See Feature on page 28

Reviewed by Alex Dudok de Wit

Is it a coincidence that several of the highest-profile 2D animated features of recent years have been about dying artforms? In Sylvain Chomet's *The Illusionist* (2010), a stage magician struggled to find work in the rock 'n' roll era; Miyazaki Hayao's *The Wind Rises* (2013) reflected fondly on an age when Japanese industry gave a maverick aeronautics engineer the chance to express himself; more obliquely, Ari Folman's *The Congress* (2013) anticipated the demise of screen acting itself.

The Secret of Kells, Tomm Moore's 2009 debut feature, adopted a similar premise. With its fictional account of the genesis of the intricately illustrated ninth-century Book of Kells, which is regarded in Ireland as a national treasure, it cast a wistful eye over the lost tradition of manuscript illumination. But if the subtext was supposed to be a lament for the moribund art of 2D animation, the film's use of that medium suggested otherwise. A kaleidoscopic mash-up of Mark Baker, Michel Ocelot, *The Legend of Zelda* videogames, German expressionism and the Insular art it celebrated, its graphic style was a thrilling reminder that 2D animation is still vital, and doesn't have to be 'traditional'.

The film was a minor hit, bagging an Oscar nomination and helping to jumpstart the Irish animation industry. It's little surprise then that Moore's sophomore feature sticks to the formula. *Song of the Sea* may not be about historical events, but Irish mythology is its narrative fabric, and nostalgia its dominant mood.

Ten-year-old Ben lives with his father and mute sister Saoirse on a remote island; their mother disappeared shortly after Saoirse's birth. Soon Saoirse begins to display magical powers and a curious attraction to the sea: she is a selkie (a seal-cum-human in Celtic folklore) but her brother doesn't know it yet. On their quest to help her find her voice, she and Ben encounter a merry band of legendary figures, including Mac Lir, the sea god turned to stone by his sorcerous mother. All of this is delivered with a light pedagogical touch: as well as entertain, Moore wants to impart their forgotten legends and myths to Irish children – and perhaps to international viewers, who see only leprechauns and Guinness when they look at Ireland.

The visual experimentation of *The Secret of Kells* has hardened into a style. The flat characters, bold shifts in palette, sudden intrusions of Flash sequences and playful manipulation of the frame are all present and correct – as is the striking use of inaccurate perspective, which makes less sense now that pre-Renaissance art isn't the subject of the film. The novelty is gone but the technical accomplishment is greater: the background landscapes, and the clouds in particular, are more beautiful than anything I've seen recently outside Studio Ghibli's work.

Indeed, the debt to Ghibli, already evident in *The Secret of Kells*, is glaring here – not just in the animation but also in the details of the plot. One scene evokes the Catbus ride in *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988), while another is practically lifted from an early encounter between Chihiro and the witch Yubaba in *Spirited Away* (2001). More generally, the narrative draws inspiration



Lady in the water: *Song of the Sea*

from folktales and the idea of the sanctity of nature. Most intriguingly – and this quality is perhaps not so much Ghibli-esque as un-American – there are no baddies as such. The antagonist turns out to have good intentions, and ‘evil’ is shown to be relative. It’s a salutary reminder that villains are not integral to an exciting story, and that kids shouldn’t have to take for granted the dualistic worldview that Disney has done so much to cement.

Moore wears his influences on his sleeve, and *Song of the Sea*, more than *The Secret of Kells*, feels derivative in places. The story is jauntier and less convoluted this time around, and is therefore

perhaps better suited to young children, if less engaging for their parents. But comparisons with its predecessor should not detract from the fact that this is a bold and unusual film, which takes material that will be unfamiliar to most viewers and interprets it with more inventiveness than they will be used to. At a time when 3D animated films can fill seats on the strength of snazzy visuals and a couple of gags, 2D animation needs to remind viewers that it is more than a set of techniques: it is a medium in its own right, rich with unique tools of expression. To survive, it needs filmmakers with imagination. Tomm Moore is one of them. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tomm Moore
Ross Murray
Paul Young
Stephan Roelants
Isabelle Truc
Serge Umé
Marc Umé
Clément Calvet
Jérémie Fajner
Frederik Villumsen
Claus Toksvig Kjaer
Screenplay
Will Collins
Based on an original story by Tomm Moore
Editor
Darragh Byrne
Production Design/

Art Direction
Adrien Mérieau
Original Music
Composed/
Orchestrated by
Bruno Coulais
Sound Design/
Sound Edit
Félix Davin
Alexandre Jaclain
Animation
Supervisors
Gilles Rudziak
Frederik Villumsen

©Cartoon Saloon,
Melusine Productions,
The Big Farm,
Superprod, Narlum

Production Companies
Presented by Cartoon Saloon, Melusine Productions, The Big Farm, Superprod, Narlum in association with Bord Scannán Na hÉireann/Irish Film Board with the support of Film Fund Luxembourg, Eurimages - Fund of the Council of Europe, Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Film and Audiovisual Centre of Wallonia Brussels Federation,

VOO, Wallonia, Danish Film Institute, Tax Shelter of the Belgian Federal Government With the participation of Orange Cinéma Séries, Haut et Court Distribution With the assistance of West Danish Film Fund Developed with the assistance of Bord Scannán Na hÉireann/The Irish Film Board
Executive Producers
Ross Murray
Paul Young

Voice Cast
David Rawle
Ben
Brendan Gleeson
Conor/Mac Lir
Fionnula Flanagan
Granny/Macha
Lisa Hannigan
Bronach
Lucy O'Connell
Saoirse
Jon Kenny
Ferry Dan/The Great Seanachai
Pat Shortt
Lug
Colm Ó Snodaigh
Mossy

Liam Hourican
Spud/bus driver
Kevin Swiercz
young Ben

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

Ben lives on a remote island with his father, dog and sister Saoirse, who cannot speak. Ben resents Saoirse, associating her with their mother's disappearance shortly after her birth. On Saoirse's sixth birthday, she finds a shell horn that belonged to their mother; when she plays it, a trail of magic light leads her to a white fur coat. She dons it and heads into the sea, where she temporarily turns into a seal.

Ben and Saoirse move to the city to live with their grandmother. Here the sounds of Saoirse's horn attract the attention of a group of Faeries, who exhort Ben to find Saoirse's fur coat, as it will enable her to sing the *Song of the Sea* and lead the Faeries home. The pair

stop at a magic well, where Saoirse is abducted by malevolent owls. Ben encounters a venerable Faerie, who directs him to the house of the witch Macha. Here he finds Saoirse, whom Macha is attempting to turn to stone. Ben rescues Saoirse, and they fly home with the help of Macha, who now sees the error of her ways.

Back at the island, Ben finds Saoirse's coat under the sea. Reunited with it, Saoirse regains her voice and sings her song, and Faeries from across the land awaken. Ben realises that his sister is a selkie – half-human, half-seal – like their mother. Their mother emerges from the sea and embraces her daughter, who says she wants to stay on earth with her family.

Spy

USA 2015

Director: Paul Feig

Certificate 15 119m 47s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

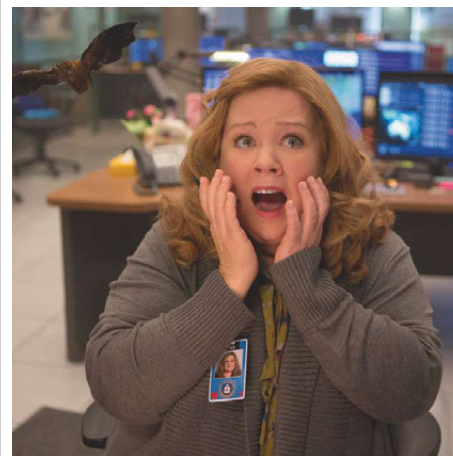
Having kicked the door in with female buddy-movie *The Heat* (2013), director Paul Feig continues on his mission to inject some girl power into the boys' club that is the action-comedy genre.

In this engaging if overstuffed spy spoof, his secret weapon is once again the exuberant Melissa McCarthy, enlivening what would otherwise be a pleasant but predictable James Bond parody. From its flickering Maurice Binder-style titles and cod John Barry theme onwards, *Spy* gets its initial comic mileage from the gap between our glossy expectations and the homely reality of our heroine's Midwestern Matron disguises. For as Susan Cooper, a docile, deskbound CIA analyst who undertakes a European mission when her agent (and secret crush) is killed, McCarthy swaps her trademark brash, trash-talking persona for that of a smart, overlooked everywoman.

Until now, McCarthy's movies, from *Bridesmaids* (2011) to *Tammy* (2014), have chiefly cast her as a female Chris Farley: a bawdy, outside clown, a creature of immodest appetites and pratfalls. Here she's a risk-averse suburbanite sent undercover as an insultingly dowdy spinster ("All I need is a T-shirt saying 'I Have Never Known A Man's Touch'") but gutsily earning her spurs.

Feig also wrote the screenplay, and he throws everything but the kitchen sink at it. His overcomplicated narrative sandwiches chatty, improv-feeling CIA scenes around workmanlike European action sequences (a wet-cement-halted car chase, an agile Jackie Chan-style kitchen knife fight) that foreground their comedy. There's a hint of edginess – squelchy stabbings, poison melting a throat like candlewax – but it's chiefly to aid the crowd-pleasing gross-out gags, such as Cooper puking volcanically over her first kill. The plot gallops along in a welter of double-crosses and one-note thugs, even if it's just a string to hang the laughs and fights on.

Propping up the peripatetic, wafer-thin story is the film's all-round amiability and its high rate of gags, many of them generated by Jason Statham's hilariously self-parodying rogue agent. As he spouts a litany of preposterous boasts ("This arm was ripped off completely, and reattached by *this* one"), his macho ineptitude contrasts neatly with Cooper's burgeooning and startling proficiency. Emerging from her good-girl



Spymistress: Melissa McCarthy

chrysalis, she reveals the ass-kicking hard nut within, tongue-lashing Rose Byrne's haughty Eurotrash villainess with brio. Less successful is the film's attempt to surround her constantly with comic foils, including Miranda Hart's patented jolly Brit and Peter Serafinowicz's relentlessly lecherous Italian agent.

Unrepentantly female-centric, the film makes a point of featuring women in the kind of key roles (sidekick, villain, a steely CIA boss played with crushing irritation by Allison Janney) they rarely get a sniff at. What's most pleasing is to see *Spy* turning its fish-out-of-water tale into one about self-actualisation. Rather than a *Spies Like Us*-style trail of bumbling, its theme is female empowerment, competence overcoming lack of confidence. McCarthy's talent for fearless physical comedy, freewheeling improv and motor-mouth rants pulls the film along like a locomotive. But it's her gameness and relatability which give the film the warmth that marks it out from the herd. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Peter Chernin Jenno Topping Paul Feig Jessie Henderson	Production Companies Twentieth Century Fox presents a Chernin Entertainment/ Feigco Entertainment production A Paul Feig film Made in association with TSG Entertainment	Bobby Cannavale Sergio De Luca Allison Janney Elaine Crocker Peter Serafinowicz Aldo Morena Baccarin Karen Walker Jude Law Bradley Fine
Written by Paul Feig Director of Photography Robert Yeoman Film Editors Brent White Melissa Bretherton	Executive Producers John J. Kelly Mike Larocca Film Extracts <i>Beaches</i> (1988)	Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] Part-subtitled
Production Designer Jefferson Sage Music Theodore Shapiro Production Sound Mixer MacRuth Costume Designer Christine Bieselin Clark	Cast Melissa McCarthy Susan Cooper Jason Statham Rick Ford Rose Byrne Rayna Boyanov Miranda Hart Nancy B. Artingstall	Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)
©Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC		

Washington, present day. Deskbound CIA analyst Susan Cooper volunteers for an urgent European mission after her agent (and secret crush) Bradley Fine is apparently killed by arms dealer Rayna. Rayna is selling a nuclear weapon to a Chechen warlord. In Paris, Susan saves rogue CIA agent Ford from a bomb. In Rome, she befriends Rayna after saving her from a poisoned drink. Susan then saves Rayna's life in an airplane ambush; she persuades Rayna that she is her secret bodyguard, appointed by Rayna's late father. In Budapest, Susan's desk analyst Nancy aids her during a car chase. Fine has double-crossed the CIA to be with his lover Rayna. They rescue Susan from a knife fight and imprison her with Aldo, an Italian CIA agent. Fine swears secretly that he's loyal to the CIA. Aldo helps Susan escape. At middleman Sergio De Luca's villa, Susan interrupts the nuclear-weapon deal. Fine takes a bullet for Susan. De Luca kills the Chechen and escapes in a helicopter with the bomb. Ford fails to stop De Luca. With Nancy's help, Susan boards the airborne helicopter and drops the bomb and De Luca into a lake.

Confirmed as an operational agent, Susan snubs Fine for a dinner with Nancy. Waking next day, she finds herself in bed with Ford.

Still the Water

Japan/France 2014
Director: Naomi Kawase
Certificate 15 118m 41s

Reviewed by Jasper Sharp

Kawase Naomi has been an almost constant fixture among the hardy perennials at Cannes since *Suzaku* (1997) earned her the Caméra d'Or for best first feature in 1997. (*The Mourning Forest* picked up the Grand Prix in 2007, while *Sweet Red Bean Paste* opened this year's Un Certain Regard section.) Nevertheless, the adulation in the francophone world has mystified both audiences and critics alike in her native Japan (it is instructive to note that the greater part of her oeuvre has been realised with French co-financing), while her maudlin and parochial dramas have similarly failed to take root in English-speaking territories. Festival screenings notwithstanding, *Still the Water*, her 2014 contender for the Palme d'Or, is her first to find distribution in the UK.

Here, the subtropical setting of Amami Oshima, an island in the Ryukyu archipelago – apparently the birthplace of Kawase's grandmother – provides something of a home from home for the Nara-based director, whose self-conscious brand of faux-naïf naturalism is at least well served by the beautiful cinematography of Yamazaki Yutaka (best known for his work with Kawase's contemporary Kore-eda Hirokazu), painting a pretty picture of this age-old community. Nevertheless, the film's depiction of the fumbling inarticulacies of young innocents as they strive to find their place within the greater macrosocum covers the same familiar ground that Kawase has inhabited since long before her perplexing receipt of the Carrosse d'Or lifetime achievement award at Cannes in 2009.

Even by Kawase's own standards, the symbolism plumbs new depths of vapidity. Sixteen-year-old Kaito, unsettled by his divorced mother's nocturnal dalliances, is terrified of what lies beneath the waves raging against a shoreline periodically assailed by typhoons. The more assertive Kyoko, by contrast, confidently submits herself to the tranquillity of the undersea world, diving beneath the waters

still wearing her school uniform as a coping mechanism while her terminally ill mother Isa (a shaman, no less) lies on her deathbed. Back on dry land, Kawase reprises the narrative shorthand from her earlier *Suzaku* and *Shara* (2003) with repeated scenes of Kaito ferrying Kyoko around a variety of picturesque locales on the back of his bicycle to a sentimental piano accompaniment in order to emphasise their near-wordless emotional connection.

Just as well, as the semi-improvised dialogue, part mumbled banalities and awkward pauses, part quasi-Buddhist homilies about cycles of life, death and regeneration and the spirit of place, is particularly trite. "Why is it that people are born and die?" Kyoko ponders dolefully at one point. "I don't know," Kaito murmurs back. Isa is at least able to give a more satisfactory response as mother and daughter offer prayers together at the local shrine. This scene is later mirrored during Kaito's reacquaintance with his estranged father, now leading a dissolute life running a tattoo parlour in Tokyo. As the older man washes his son's back at a communal bathhouse, he expounds on the eternal bond between maternal flesh and spirit. A parable-cum-pep-talk about surfing delivered by Kyoko's father Tetsu eventually quells Kaito's disquiet about the ocean, prompting a *Blue Lagoon*-inspired nude swimming sequence over the reefs after the youngsters finally take the plunge and consummate their relationship in the sands.

Compounding the problems of length and pacing all too prevalent in contemporary Japanese cinema, Kawase's routine emphasis on the minutiae of the everyday lives and customs of her characters comes across as more tourist-board artifice than ethnographic realism. A *sanshin* (the Okinawan precursor to the *shamisen*) is dragged out for a round of song as the extended family of villagers gather and perform a traditional dance around Isa's sickbed to ease her passing into the spirit world. It all just seems that little bit too much, and yet at the same time, much too little. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Aoki Takehiko Sawada Masa Naomi Kawase Written by Naomi Kawase Director of Photography Yamazaki Yutaka Film Editor Tina Baz Art Director Inoue Kenji Music Hasiken Sound Recordist Ao Shigetake	Pony Canyon Participation: Arte France, Aide aux Cinemas du Monde, Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Institut Français With the support of Région Île-de-France Executive Producer Yamamoto Reiji	Kamejiro Sakaki Hideo In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles Distributor Soda Pictures Japanese theatrical title <i>Futatsumo no Mado</i>
©Japanese Film Partners, Comme des Cinemas, Arte France Cinéma, Lluís Miñarro Production Companies Production: WowWow, Comme des Cinemas Co-production: Asmik Ace, ARTE France, Kumie, Lluís Miñarro,	Cast Murakami Nijiro Kaito Yoshinaga Jun Kyoko Matsuda Miyuki Isa Sugimoto Tetta Tetsu Watanabe Makiko Misaki Murakami Jun Atsushi Tokita Fujio	

The remote Japanese island of Amami Oshima, present day. The corpse of a tattooed man is washed up on the beach. Its discovery by 16-year-old Kaito exacerbates his fear of the ocean, while classmate Kyoko defies the temporary ban on swimming as she comes to terms with her shaman mother Isa's terminal illness. Kaito and Kyoko begin dating. Kyoko is given a lesson about the permanence of the spirit by the community's chief shaman. Kaito's divorced mother is seldom home, leaving notes telling him that she is working, though he suspects otherwise. Isa returns home to pass her final days with her family at the bar owned by her husband Tetsu; Kaito visits his estranged father, who runs a tattoo parlour in Tokyo. Some time later, Isa passes away peacefully at home. That night, Kyoko asks Kaito to have sex; he refuses and goes home, where he angrily confronts his mother, suspecting that the washed-up corpse was her lover. Kyoko interrupts their argument and Kaito runs into the night. Kyoko follows him and takes him to her home, where Tetsu calms him. Next morning Kaito is reconciled with his mother at the café where she works. Kyoko and Kaito make love before diving naked into the sea.

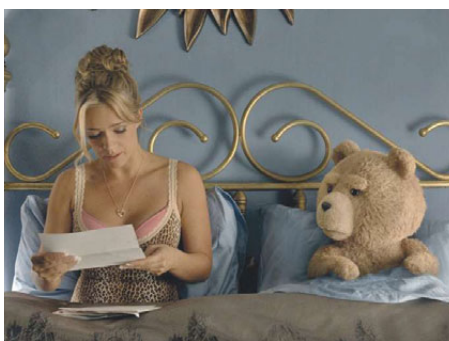
Ted 2

USA/Japan 2015
Director: Seth MacFarlane

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

If it matters (and it's not clear that it does, given the low expectations reasonably attending Seth MacFarlane's work), *Ted 2* is an improvement on its 2012 predecessor, with more regularly allotted solid laughs and fewer unearned claims on audience emotions. *Ted* told the story of John Bennett (Mark Wahlberg) and his lifelong best friend Ted (voiced by MacFarlane), a teddy bear who'd magically come to life when John was a child. Their inseparable companionship – frequently cemented by heavy marijuana and alcohol intake – proved an obstacle to John's impending marriage to Lori (Mila Kunis), and so *Ted* (with a palpable lack of sincerity) argued that maturity requires leaving certain bad habits behind and embracing committed (semi-) sobriety.

In *Ted 2* the teddy bear's plot provides an opportunity for unsubtle advocacy of gay marriage, which MacFarlane has publicly supported. At the film's outset, Ted and girlfriend Tami-Lynn (Jessica Barth) have married and descended into regular rancour; their fundamentally unsound solution is to have a child. When their adoption efforts draw the state's attention, Ted is downgraded from 'human' status to 'property'. This annuls his marriage and makes him unemployable, so civil rights lawyer Samantha Leslie Jackson (Amanda Seyfried) must argue his case in court. The state's attorney (John Slattery) uses a slippery-slope argument ("Does your dog deserve human rights? Your cat? Your toaster?") that unambiguously parallels



Bear necessity: Jessica Barth

those raised by gay-marriage opponents who claim with all seriousness that the next step is legalised bestiality. If the point isn't clear, Ted shouts out what's happening in court: "It's exactly what you're doing to the fags."

Some viewers will have trouble reconciling MacFarlane's progressive-minded allegory with his retrograde willingness to offend for shock comic effect. A series of gags predicated on men being horrified at touching another man's penis (even in the form of a phallic bong) and one semen-drenched gross-out set piece will surely earn stern reproofs regarding the spectre of 'gay panic'. MacFarlane's puerile streak may render him a less than ideal ally, but it's hard to claim the film is socially toxic, regardless of whatever still latently freaks MacFarlane out. More problematic, in any case, is the regular yoking of Ted's plight to the civil rights movement, invoked way too many times in what's still a wilfully dumb stoner-oriented comedy.

Like his animated sitcom *Family Guy* or the first *Ted*, *Ted 2* sticks to MacFarlane's regular comic method: haphazardly throwing lots of jokes and non sequiturs at the wall, often by cutting to a quick scene fleshing out a standalone gag premise. A relentless barrage of good, bad and mediocre jokes certainly isn't a unique comic method, though MacFarlane's version is notable for certain tonal peculiarities (many of his most effective jokes rely on people finding almost laudably idiosyncratic ways to taunt others) and the relatively low rate of return.

On the technical front, *Ted 2* is characterised by an eerie near-total absence of location or ambient sound; it seemingly takes place in some kind of environmental vacuum. Given that storyline coherence is subordinated to the relentless quest for gags, it's a shame MacFarlane relies heavily on establishing cranes outside apartment buildings or helicopter shots of cars on the highway, rote connective tissue that stalls pacing and contains no visual wit. For all that, *Ted 2* hits the comic mark every eight minutes or so; it's too bad MacFarlane has no quality control but, much like the proverbial stopped clock, he's occasionally spot-on.

In every way, this film expresses its maker's strange sensibility, complete with a straight-faced opening credits number indulging his love of the old-fashioned musical. It's unexcitingly passable Busby Berkeley pastiche without a joke in it, there simply because the big-band-loving MacFarlane wants it to be. It's only a matter of time before someone tries to reclaim him as a major auteur. 6

That Sugar Film

Australia 2014
Director: Damon Gameau
Certificate 12A 101m 53s

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

Anyone who ever grew hungry at the opening credits of *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (1971), with its geometry of molten chocolate ribboning on to conveyor belts, will feel *That Sugar Film* like root canal to a rotted tooth. For although it nods to the earlier film with its own candied, CG beginning, Damon Gameau's persuasive documentary is eye-opening rather than mouth-watering.

The kind of excitement about chocolate that drove Mel Stuart's Roald Dahl adaptation looks as dated now as the long lapels on Mrs Teevee's coatdress. Her son Mike's TV dinners were invented in the 1950s, but it's really only since the release of Stuart's film – and subsequent innovations in frozen foods, made conceivable by the home freezer and the microwave – that the prepared meal has become a staple of the western diet. As Gameau's film attests, we are living in a changed world. Wonka's river of chocolate has broken free of the factory; now Jamba Juice, Krispy Kreme and countless other alliterative purveyors of high-sugar convenience foods spring up on every corner. Father-to-be and first-time documentarian Gameau wishes to show how sugar is no longer the preserve of conserves and desserts but is everywhere – and more damaging to our health than most of us realise.

Making his case without bloviation, Gameau devotes two months to consuming 40 teaspoons of sugar a day (the intake of the average Australian) in an experiment resembling Morgan Spurlock's commitment to eat only McDonalds for 30 days in *Super Size Me* (2004). Gameau gains 71lbs within the first 12 days. When, by the end of the eight weeks, his waist has expanded by ten inches and he's steering a course towards obesity, diabetes and other metabolic disorders, it's not for lack of exercise or because he's been bolting Spurlock's junk food, but rather because he's been consuming supposedly 'healthy' brands of cereal, low-fat yoghurt and fruit juice. Add to this the effects on mental function, to which Gameau gives equal stress. Fearing for school-age children, he reports feeling "vague" and "aloof", exhausted, less efficient, with a shorter fuse and severely reduced attention. A member of his panel of experts – whose talking heads, superimposed on to packaging, usurp the familiar trademark personalities of Aunt Jemima and the Quaker Man – confirms that this is the norm for most people: our "mind[s] [are] cloudy all of the time... unstable".

Such descriptions of the sugar-rush set one wondering if it induced the chaotic aesthetic of Gameau's film. Every frame is



Sweet tooth: Kieron Rooney, Damon Gameau

Credits and Synopses

Produced by
Scott Stuber
Seth MacFarlane
Jason Clark
John Jacobs

Written by
Seth MacFarlane
Alec Sulkin
Wellesley Wild
Based on characters created by Seth MacFarlane

Director of Photography
Michael Barrett

Editor
Jeff Freeman
Production Designer
Stephen Lineweaver

Music
Walter Murphy
Sound Design/Supervision

Elliott L. Koretz
Costume Designer
Cindy Evans

Character Animation/Visual Effects
Iloura
Tippett Studio

@Universal Studios and MRC
II Distribution
Company LP

Production Companies
Universal Pictures
and MRC present
a Fuzzy Door production
A Bluegrass Films production

A film by Seth MacFarlane
Made with the assistance of the Australian Government
Presented in association with Dentsu Inc./Fuji Television Network, Inc.

Executive Producers
Alec Sulkin
Wellesley Wild
Cast
Mark Wahlberg
John Bennett
Seth MacFarlane

voice of Ted
Amanda Seyfried
Samantha Leslie Jackson
Giovanni Ribisi

Donny
John Slattery
Shep Wild
Jessica Barth
Tami-Lynn

Morgan Freeman
Patrick Meighan
Sam J. Jones
himself
Patrick Warburton
Guy
Michael Dorn
Rick
Bill Smitrovich
Frank

Dolby Digital/ Datasat Digital Sound
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Ire

Boston, the present. A year after their marriage, sentient teddy bear Ted and wife Tami-Lynn often fight. They decide that a child will help their relationship, but their adoption efforts lead the state to declare Ted 'property' rather than human. With help from young lawyer Samantha, Ted and best friend John Bennett successfully fight the case in court. Ted and Tami-Lynn remarry; Samantha and John become a couple.

overstuffed with stimulating information, made foggy by a Rainbow Drops palette and Road Runner cutaways. Does the film deliberately synthesise the 'manic' quality of the sugar high? Or does it assume that its viewers, addled by consumption of the stuff, would drift off in search of some instantaneous sugar-hit entertainment were it not for the occasional distractions of Stephen Fry and Hugh Jackman lecturing them in biology and history?

Wherever the film is aimed (and one suspects it's the classroom), Gameau is undeniably on the side of the consumer, and this consumer comes in all shapes and sizes. His case studies run the gamut from a Kentucky teenager being treated for 'Mountain Dew Mouth' to an Aboriginal community falling foul of soft drinks.

As the UK government withdraws support for its lowest-income families, Gameau's film feels timeliest in furnishing a link between sugar and poverty, affirming how hard it is for poorer households to find alternatives to those low-priced, high-sugar foods perennially 'on offer'. One almost wishes that Gameau had taken the logical leap and proposed, as James Agee did when writing of the sharecroppers in the Depression-era south, subsisting on sorghum and molasses, that sugar may also perpetuate poverty by its "steady, brutal bastinado of the bowels and belly and brain".

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Nick Batzias
Damon Gameau
Rory Williamson
Gina Carter

Written by

Damon Gameau

Director of Photography

Judd Overton

Editor

Jane Usher

Production Designer

Gareth Davies

Original Music

Jojo Petrina

Sound Recordists

Damon Gameau
Judd Overton
Lynne Butler
Nick Campbell

Costume Designers

Chloe Greaves
Callan Bradley Hales

Production Companies

Madman Production
Pty Ltd, Old Mates
Productions Pty Ltd,
That Sugar Movie Pty

Executive Producers

Paul Wiegand
Jason Sourasis
Will Machen
Natalie Brenner
Sam Parker

Ltd, Screen Australia

Production Companies

Madman Production
Company
Screen Australia
Old Mates
Productions
Developed with the
assistance of Film
Victoria Australia
Financed in
association with
Export Finance
and Insurance
Corporation
Produced with the
assistance of Old
Mates Productions
Financed with the
assistance of
Screen Australia
Madman Production

Cast

Stephen Fry
the sugar family
sketch
Brenton Thwaites
the liver sketch
Isabel Lucas
sugary words
Jessica Marais
sugar emotion
sketch
John Leary
ballet business man
Nick Batzias
father
Katie Batzias
mother
Annalise
Braakensiek
bikini girl on beach
Kieron Rooney
scientist in lab

In Colour

Distributor
Soda Pictures

Producers

Boris Ausserer
Oliver Schündler
Fred Breinersdorfer

Written by

Fred Breinersdorfer
Léonie-Claire
Breinersdorfer

Director of Photography

Judith Kaufmann

Editor

Alexander Dittner
Set Design
Benedikt Herforth
Thomas Stammer

Music

David Holmes

Sound

Steffen Graubaum

Costume Design

Bettina Marx

Production Companies

Produced by Lucky
Bird Pictures
Co-produced by SWR,
ARD Degeto, BR,
WDR, ARTE, Delphi
Medien and Philipp
filmproduction

Cast

Christian Friedel
Georg Elser
Katharina Schüttler
Elsa
Burghart Klausner
Arthur Nebe
Johann von Bülow
Heinrich Müller
Felix Eitner
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Ludwig Elser
Michael Kranz

Franz Xaver Lechner

Gerti Drassl
Lore
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitled
Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

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Subtitled
Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

The Wrecking Crew

USA 2014

Director: Denny Tedesco

Reviewed by Sam Davies

Its production history is such that you could almost file *The Wrecking Crew* as slow cinema. Director Denny Tedesco began work on it as long ago as 1996, which gives an unintentional archive ambience to some clips of interview subjects who have aged the best part of 20 years since. Completed and screened at festivals in 2008, *The Wrecking Crew* then languished on the shelf due to the prohibitive licensing costs incurred by its sprawling soundtrack. Only a recent Kickstarter campaign has crowdfunded the money for a theatrical release.

As a result, *The Wrecking Crew* seems to be trailing after rather than leading a mini-crop of films shining a spotlight on the generally unheralded role of the studio session player. *Standing in the Shadows of Motown* (2002) told the story of the Funk Brothers, Motown's in-house team of musicians. In 2013, *Muscle Shoals* featured the Swampers, who did so much to define the Alabama studio's sound.

What separates the Wrecking Crew from those groups is their incredible versatility. On the scene just as the American music industry began to migrate in the 60s from East Coast to West, from the Brill Building to the home of the film industry, there they were, ready to play any role. Pop, rock, surf, easy listening, jazz, crooners, country; The Ronettes, The Beach Boys, The Mamas & the Papas, The Monkees, Herb Alpert, Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Glen Campbell, David Axelrod.

Different members have different estimates of how many musicians actually constituted the Wrecking Crew: a dozen, a score, two dozen. By the time the credits roll, at least a dozen musicians are named under each instrument and the Wrecking Crew roster has easily swollen into triple figures. Their name comes from drummer (and Phil Karlson fan?) Hal Blaine, in reference to the way they elbowed aside an older, more formal generation of session players, known as 'the blazers'.

Some of the film's best material comes from round-table set-ups in which some of the musicians sit reminiscing. Guitar player Tommy Tedesco (father of the director) is a born raconteur, who later in his career filled in time between



Behind the scenes: Hal Blaine, Glen Campbell

sessions by running masterclasses, clips from which are sprinkled through *The Wrecking Crew*. Bassist Carol Kaye is a far more laconic figure, but everything she says is telling. "One year in the mid-60s I earned more than the president," she remembers. Plugged in, she demonstrates how, given the original charts for Sonny & Cher's 'The Beat Goes On', she substituted its plodding one-note bass for one with swing. She's especially acute on Phil Spector's famous 'Wall of Sound' production style. With its numerous instruments (half a dozen guitars, four pianos and two basses minimum) and the exhaustion of the players themselves, drilled over and over by Spector in rehearsal, the effect, she points out, was a hazy, swimming quality – not so much a wall as a sea. A working mother who more than held her own in what was clearly a not-always-welcoming boys' club, Kaye (now 80) comes across as a figure who could have had a documentary all to herself.

The Wrecking Crew offers snapshots of an industry in turmoil, a group portrait of colleagues who were also friends, but also an insight into the precarious and demanding life of a freelancer. You never turned down work, and you almost never saw your children. Offered a job an hour's drive away, says Tommy Tedesco, you said you'd be there in half an hour. You never needed to practice, points out drummer Earl Palmer, because you were always playing, often 12 hours a day.

What marked the Crew out above all was this kind of professionalism. Roger McGuinn of The Byrds tells the story of recording the group's debut single 'Mr Tambourine Man'. To his bandmates' fury, he was the only one trusted to play in the studio. But where the session players plus McGuinn cut two tracks in three hours, it subsequently took The Byrds themselves 77 takes to record 'Turn! Turn! Turn!'. Many of the musicians replaced on record by the Wrecking Crew took a more philosophical view. Beach Boys drummer Dennis Wilson was initially galled to find that Blaine was taking his place in the studio. "But when he made his solo album later on," Blaine recalls, "he called me to play drums on it." ☺

Wyrnwood

Australia 2014

Director: Kiah Roach-Turner

Certificate 98m 29s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

"Barry, you got any stories?" "This morning, I shot my wife and child with a nail gun. I don't know how to turn that into a story."

Yes... another bloody zombie apocalypse movie. At this point, George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), patient zero of the outbreak, must outrank even *Nosferatu* (1922), *Frankenstein* (1931) and *Psycho* (1960) as the most influential horror film of all time. In the 1970s, the takeover from *Night* was both artistic and industrial – encouraging a more gruesome, socially engaged, revisionist horror (as practised by filmmakers as diverse as Tobe Hooper, Larry Cohen, Wes Craven, John Carpenter and David Cronenberg) and serving as a model for low-budget, far-from-Hollywood production entities (including folks like George Miller, Peter Jackson and the Spierig brothers in the Antipodes) to compete with the major studios. With the latest wave of the living dead – encompassing bigger-budgeted films like *Zombieland* (2009) and *World War Z* (2013), TV shows including *The Walking Dead* and *In the Flesh* and odd indies such as *The Battery* (2012) and *Maggie* (2015) – the influence has narrowed. In a feeding frenzy of rehashes of the subject matter of *Night of the Living Dead*, one-off aspects of Romero's film (for example the near-universal acceptance of shooting in the brain as a sound method of zombie despatch) have become enshrined as tenets of the genre. Right now, the zombie apocalypse is as frequently visited a genre backdrop as, say, the American western was in 1955.

Wyrnwood is a cheap and (mostly) cheerful Aussie gorefest from the Roache-Turner brothers – writer-producer Tristan and writer-director Kiah – which throws in a few new ideas. A weird side effect of the undead plague is that all flammable liquids become inert, while the zombies' blood becomes volatile, and during the daytime their foul exhalations provide a potent new fuel for the hero's truck. After dark, however, they are fuelled by the gas themselves – though the film doesn't follow up on the notion that they're sluggish by day but deadly at night. The rationale is ambiguous: jokey Aboriginal mysticism and a meteor shower that might be the Wormwood of the Book of Revelation suggest a supernatural effect, while talk of a plague that targets specific blood groups indicates a more logical explanation. In another lift from Romero, the scientific and military authorities are vicious and corrupt, posing more of a danger to the

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Suzie Greene
Tedesco
Denny Tedesco

Written by

Claire Scanlon
Jon Leonoudakis
Mitchell Linden
Damon Tedesco

Chris Hope

Directors of Photography

Rodney Taylor

Edited by

Trish Govoni
Claire Scanlon
Sound Recording

Mike Reilly

Paul Marshall
Damon Tedesco
Brian 'B-Man' Bidder

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Executive Producers

Herb Alpert

Jerry Moss
Cliff Burnstein
Dennis Joyce

In Colour

Distributor

MusicFilmNetwork

A documentary telling the story of the Wrecking Crew, an informal group of elite session musicians working in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s. This extended group of drummers, keyboard players, guitarists and horn players contributed to countless hit records of all genres, receiving little or no public credit at the time. Numerous members of the 'Crew' are interviewed, alongside many of the artists they played for.



Fuelling the war: Bianca Bradley

ordinary protagonists than the monsters do. *Wyrmswood* takes things further, as the experimented-on tough-chick heroine (Bianca Bradey) rises as a white-eyed alpha zombie who commands her fellow shambling dead in a war with the cruel, decontamination-suited remnants of the old regime.

Early on, Barry (Jay Gallagher), the family-man mechanic protagonist, has to put down his infected wife and daughter. The situation would be more poignant if the whole loved-one-returns-as-a-zombie-and-has-to-be-destroyed gambit weren't so overused as to be denuded of effect (possible origin: Arthur staking Lucy in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*). Mostly, *Wyrmswood* is phlegmatic, with characters accepting their fates with a shrug and beer-related 'strine humour, though Gallagher and Leon Burchill (as fellow survivor Benny) manage some numbed character beats before they clap on homemade armour and repurpose cutting tools as weapons. There's a touch of *Mad Max* in the on-the-road aspect, down to the use of a razor boomerang, though the look of these survivalists is closer to Luc Besson's *Le Dernier Combat* (1983). Inevitably, the homemade splatter effects are augmented by CGI blood-spurts – the signature look of this phase of the zombie apocalypse. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Tristan Roache-Turner	Companies Screen Australia presents a Roache-Turner Brothers film	Catherine Terracini Annie
Written by Kiah Roache-Turner	Executive Producers Jamie Hilton	Meganne West Meganne
Director of Photography Tim Nagle	Producers Josh Pomeranz	Yure Covich Chalker
Editor Kiah Roache-Turner	Cast Jay Gallagher	In Colour [1.85:1]
Production Designer Tristan Roache-Turner	Barry	Distributor Studiocanal Limited
Music Michael Lira	Bianca Bradey	
Sound Recordist Nathaniel Watkins	Brooke	
Costume Design Lara Cross	Leon Burchill	
Production Sam Hennings	Benny	
	Keith Agius	
	Frank	
	Berynn Schwerdt	
	the doctor	
	Luke McKenzie	
	the captain	
	Cain Thompson	
	McLaughlin and Kelly	
	Damian Dyke	
	Thompson	

Australia. A storm of shooting stars and an airborne contagion transform most people into zombies, though those of the A-negative blood group hold out against the infection until they are bitten. After family man Barry is forced to kill his infected wife and daughter with a nail gun, he sets out across country to rescue his sister Brooke; she has fallen into the clutches of a mad scientist who is experimenting on zombies with the aid of the military. Barry falls in with fellow survivors Benny and Frank. They discover that although petrol is no longer flammable, zombie blood is, and that a gas the zombies exhale during the daytime can power vehicles. Frank dies on the road. Thanks to the experiments, Brooke develops an ability to control zombies – she uses this to escape from restraints and kill the scientist. Barry and Benny try to rescue Brooke from the soldiers, and Benny allows himself to be bitten so that Brooke can control him. Though shot dead, Brooke rises as the commander of a zombie horde.

Zarafa

France/Belgium 2011

Directors: Rémi Bezançon, Jean-Christophe Lie

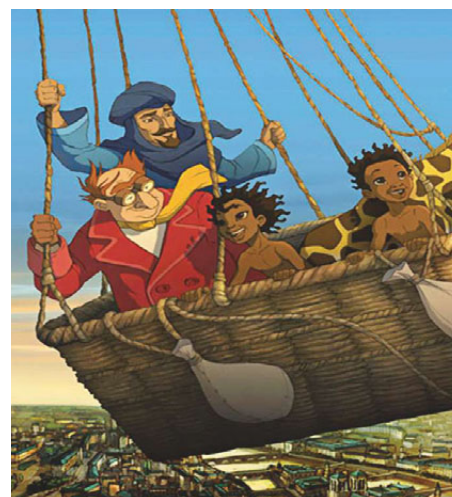
Reviewed by Alex Dudok de Wit

The Lion King (1994) opened on a dazzling sunrise over the savannah. In *Zarafa*, the first thing we see is a bulging moon obscured by inky wisps of cloud. The contrast is apt, for while their common African setting may invite superficial comparison, in tone these two animated films are as night and day. Of course, there is violence in *The Lion King*, but it is only a blip in a world that is essentially good. *Zarafa* begins with a slave boy's flight from his colonial oppressor, and the rest of the film is shot through with the threat of persecution and a burning awareness of society's iniquities.

The boy, Maki, seeks refuge among giraffes from the realm of humans but is soon dragged back into it when one of the animals, Zarafa, is abducted by a Bedouin nomad. Cue a tortuous journey to Paris, where Zarafa is to be presented to King Charles X. An expedition like this actually happened in the 1820s, and though director Rémi Bezançon (who co-wrote the script) plays fast and loose with the facts, the film is wholly sincere in its concern with the ethical problems surrounding the episode. The slave trade is a looming presence, the caprice of kings is exposed and Bourbon France in its late decadence comes in for ridicule.

This may not sound like much of a children's film, but then *Zarafa* doubles up as a classic tale of derring-do in the mould of Jules Verne or *Tintin*. For all its distaste for colonial structures, it is unafraid to resurrect the tropes of oriental adventure romances: pirates, camels, scimitars, wily Arab merchants. The plot is evenly paced, sometimes plodding, and moments of contrived danger sit uneasily alongside a general aversion to grand dramatic gesture. Kids will be entertained, but older viewers may yearn for a few more thrills and an extra dash of originality.

They can find solace in the ravishing animation, overseen by co-director (and Disney veteran) Jean-Christophe Lie. The expanses of



Slave route: *Zarafa*

the savannah and desert are captured in bold, flat compositions, at times verging on the abstract. In contrast, the urban segments are packed to the frames with intricate background art. But this is a film that unfolds half in obscurity, and it is the exquisitely graded night-time scenes – a notorious challenge to animators – that best complement its sombre tenor.

When it was released in France, *Zarafa* attracted some controversy over its misrepresentation of the giraffe's treatment in captivity, and spokespeople for the zoo in question went public to set the record straight. Yet to squabble over the conditions within the enclosure is to miss the film's point. In a revealing moment, we cut away from the giraffe in her cage to Maki behind prison bars. Zoos deprive animals of their liberty, and so it is with civilisation and humans. Call it *Free Willy* without the freedom: for all the film's clichés and contrivances, its message is as clear as the full moon. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Valérie Schermann	Production Companies Prima Linea	Roger Dumas Charles X
Christophe Jankovic	Screenplay/ Dialogue Alexander Abela	Ronit Elkabetz Bouboulina
Rémi Bezançon	Adaptation Rémi Bezançon	Fellag Mahmoud
In collaboration with Jean-François Halin,	co-production With the participation of Canal+, Ciné+ and France Télévisions	Deborah François adult Zarafa
Vanessa Portal	Supported by Pôle image Magellis	Thierry Frémont Moreno
Based on an original idea by Alexander Abela,	With the support of Département de la Charente and Région Poitou-Charentes	Philippe Morier-Genoud Saint-Hilaire
Rémi Bezançon,	In partnership with C.N.C.	Clara Quilichini Soula
Jean-Claude Jean	Executive Producer Natalie Altmann	Max Renaudin Maki
Editor Sophie Reine		Mostefa Stiti Pacha
Graphic Design Jean-Christophe Lie		In Colour [2.35:1]
Music Laurent Perez Del Mar		Subtitles
Sound Supervisor Bruno Seznec		Distributor Soda Pictures
Animation Director Yoshimichi Tamura		
	Voice Cast Simon Abkarian	
	Hassan	
	François-Xavier	
	Demaïson	
	Malaterre	
	Vernon Dobtcheff	
	wise old man	

Sudan, the 1820s. Maki, a young boy sold into slavery with his friend Soula, flees his owner Moreno and finds refuge among giraffes. Moreno finds him and kills a giraffe; a Bedouin named Hassan intervenes, scares off Moreno and captures the dead giraffe's daughter. Vowing to bring the captive giraffe back, Maki follows Hassan.

Maki learns that Hassan has captured the giraffe (naming her Zarafa) on behalf of the Pasha of Egypt, who will offer her to the King of France in the hope of obtaining military assistance against the Turks. Maki and Hassan accompany Zarafa to Paris, crossing the Mediterranean by hot-air balloon and navigating various dangers in France. Zarafa is received with indifference by the king, who refuses to assist Egypt. However, Parisians throng to the zoo to gawp at the animal, and giraffe mania grips the capital.

Distraught by the failure of his mission, Hassan sinks into depression. Maki is abducted by Moreno, who has followed him to Paris. Maki is reunited with Soula; the pair escape and plot to return Zarafa to Africa by balloon, but reluctantly abandon their plan when they realise the giraffe is now too large to transport. Moreno catches up and tries to kill Maki, but Hassan intervenes again, and is shot. Maki and Soula escape in the balloon; Moreno grabs on to the basket but falls into the bear pit.

Back in Sudan, Maki and Soula found a thriving village. In the zoo, Zarafa is introduced to a male giraffe.



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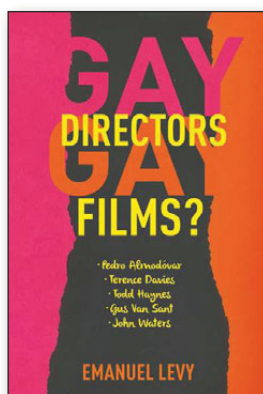
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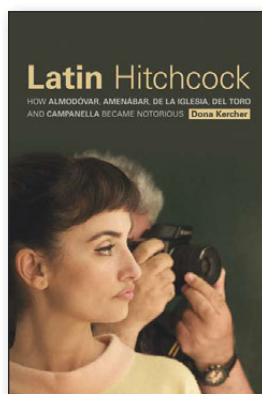
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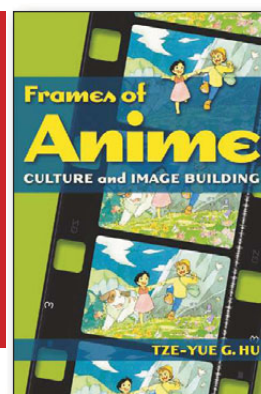
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Home cinema



A blizzard of decomposed images: Bill Morrison's *The Mesmerist* (2003), which uses damaged footage from a 1926 Boris Karloff film

THE MOVIE ALCHEMIST

Bill Morrison's 'trance films' take decaying images from the nitrate vaults and turn them into hypnotic phantasmagoria

BILL MORRISON SELECTED FILMS 1996-2014

Bill Morrison; USA 1996-2014 (one film is a co-production with Italy); BFI/three-disc set/Region B Blu-ray; 17 films, totalling 460 minutes; exempt from certification; 4:3, 2.4:1 (and one extra in 16:9); Features: 'Bill Morrison: The Film Archaeologist' (Denmark, 2013, nine minutes), brochure containing essays by Lawrence Wechsler, Alex Ross, Gareth Evans, Geoffrey Hines, Sukhdev Sandhu, Steve Dollar and Matt Levine

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Like Criterion's two sets of films by Stan Brakhage, the BFI's anthology of Bill Morrison films is almost too much of a good thing. It's exhaustive, and exhausting. Thanks to *Decasia* (2002), Morrison is well known for (a) working

in equal creative partnerships with modernist and jazz musicians, and (b) retrieving and repurposing archive film, particularly footage which has suffered major or minor decay of its nitrate chemical base. Most films in this set play to those same strengths, and nobody is ever likely to watch all seven hours and 40 minutes of them straight through. It's a set to be sampled and savoured at leisure.

For all his work's focus on what has been and is being lost, Morrison (born in Chicago in 1965) often seems like a hippie out of his time – an impression broadly confirmed by the short interview included here as an extra on Disc 1, in which he looks and sounds vaguely academic but speaks about spiritual transcendence. Actually, the set suggests that there are two Morrisons, peaceably coexisting. One is an idiosyncratic documentarist who uses archival newsreel footage to re-examine historical events (World War I, the Mississippi Delta floods of 1927, Oliver Sacks's successful

treatment in 1969-70 of patients who had been comatose for decades); this Morrison differs from orthodox archive-trawling documentary-makers principally in his unusual formal strategies and his willingness to use decayed or damaged images. The other is the hippie who brings a metaphysical eye to psychedelic visuals and is interested in heightened states of consciousness.

Spoiler alert: this paragraph risks nullifying the suspense built up in the 2010 short *Release*. The two sides of Morrison come closest to merging in *Release*, which is the most formalist short in the set. He takes one newsreel shot, a very slightly halting pan across a street in central Philadelphia, from the crowd of onlookers corralled on one side of the street to the state penitentiary opposite, and builds a 13-minute film from it. First, he takes the shot and flips it, presenting the original and its mirror-image side by side in a Scope ratio. Second, he repeats the shot many times, each time extending its beginning and end by a couple of seconds. Across the repetitions, we

gradually get used to the odd way the image is presented and start to focus on details – and, as always happens with looped repetitions, we learn to anticipate certain moments: a vehicle passes, a press photographer moves into position. The later repetitions of the shot are extended enough to show the opening of a door in the prison building; oddly, given the undramatic context, a kind of suspense is generated as we wait to see who will step through the opened door. Only in the final pass of the shot do we see Al Capone emerge and move off – and only in the closing credits do we discover that the figure *was* Al Capone and that this happened on 17 March 1930. Morrison has taken a neutral, inexpressive newsreel shot and turned it into a formalised visual event capable of triggering emotion. Vijay Iyer's accompanying soundscape helps, of course.

Release was made as an installation for an exhibition in Philadelphia, and end credits reveal that nearly all the 17 films on the discs were made on commission: some for exhibitions, some for live music/film events, and a couple were originally used in theatre performances. That doesn't imply that they don't stand up as films – far from it – but it does mean that the home-viewing experience sometimes feels a little incomplete. The 41-minute compilation of WWI newsreels, some of them with expressionistically decayed images, in *Beyond Zero: 1914-1918* (2014) is less resonant and impressive in its own right than, say, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's conceptually similar *Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Music to Accompany a Cinematographic Scene* (1972). But seeing it with the Kronos Quartet (for whom it was commissioned) playing Aleksandra Vrebalov's original score live was very possibly something else again.

Morrison has named his own company Hypnotic Pictures, and it's pretty clear that his commitment to what we might call 'trance film' trumps his enthusiasm for multimedia performances. He dramatised his own surrender to the joy of exploring archives in his early short *The Film of Her* (1996), which rhymes his personal journey into the nitrate vaults with a celebration of the pre-war heroes who realised the value of the paper-print collection in the Library of Congress and at the same time introduces the kind of imagery that will reappear in his later work, including microphotography of cells and amoebae and astronomical shots of heavenly bodies. Six years later *Decasia* represented an epiphany of sorts: an epic-scale assemblage of disparate material unified both by Michael Gordon's quasi-symphonic score and by the foregrounding of nitrate damage. You couldn't isolate or define an overall meaning, but the beautiful/terrible decay somehow meshes with the innate poignancy of old film images – the sense that the people represented are long dead, and that these near-lost images may be all that's left of them – to create a powerful awareness of the transience of all things.

Right after *Decasia*, Morrison went on to explore such spiritual implications in two remarkable shorts using damaged footage from the 1926 feature *The Bells*, directed by James Young. (We're left wondering if the film also



Just Ancient Loops (2012)

survives undamaged, but Morrison never tells.) *The Mesmerist* (2003) uses an episode with Boris Karloff as a fairground hypnotist who brings a man in the audience under his control and makes him confess to his recent murder of a Polish Jew; the framing footage is shown 'straight' but the flashback to the murder is a mesmeric blizzard of decomposed images, an extraordinary, material-based phantasmagoria. Then *Light Is Calling* (2004) reworks an episode in which an innkeeper's daughter is accidentally thrown from her carriage and rescued by a passing horseman; the drama of the original scene is barely discernible through the swirling decay, but Morrison replaces it with his own 'drama' of the images' struggle to survive the damage.

Morrison was interested in trances even before he surrendered to movie archaeology.

The beautiful/terrible decay somehow meshes with the innate poignancy of old film images to create an awareness of transience



The Great Flood (2013)

His earlyish short *Ghost Trip* (2000), apparently inspired by the ornate cemeteries of New Orleans, is a spectral psychodrama in the vein of Maya Deren which uses no found footage at all. His blends of original and reworked footage peak in the single most masterly film in this set, *Just Ancient Loops* (2012), which places trance-effect material (such as apocalyptically damaged footage of a solar eclipse) in a conceptual framework that's pure poetry.

Around the film's mid-point Morrison switches from found footage to an original computer-animated sequence showing Jupiter's four moons and their looping orbits, and then provides a range of visual analogies for their motion, from revolving machinery to strips of film-stock wound through baths of chemicals. The ending nudges the motif of loops into metaphor, with exquisite clips from old biblical films summarising the cycle of life from the Garden of Eden to Christ's resurrection and ascension.

Overall, the set definitively establishes Morrison as the heir to the spirit of the 'New American Cinema' of the 1960s; if he'd been born a generation earlier, he'd no doubt have been a leading light of the New York Filmmakers' Co-op or the Canyon Cinematheque. His slowed-down explorations of decayed nitrate films have a direct precedent in Ken Jacobs's elaborate reworking of a D.W. Griffith short in *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* (1969), and his collaging of seemingly disparate imagery parallels the work of Bruce Conner, Robert Breer and Craig Baldwin. The final chapter of his feature *The Great Flood* (2013), which features silent footage of such legendary bluesmen as Big Bill Broonzy, Son House and Sonny Boy Williamson – incidentally giving composer Bill Frisell one of his biggest challenges – even suggests a distant kinship with the musicological films of Les Blank. Right now, though, Morrison is out there on his own. 📺

New releases

THE BOYS IN THE BAND

William Friedkin; USA 1970; Kino Lorber/Region A Blu-ray; 118 minutes; 1.78:1; Features: audio commentary by William Friedkin, three documentary featurettes

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

William Friedkin, in a late-career renaissance that came from filming the works of playwright Tracy Letts (with 2006's *Bug* and 2011's *Killer Joe*), was returning to his early days as a feature director, when he built his reputation as an ingenious adapter of stage properties such as Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band*.

The latter is perhaps not what one first thinks of as "Friedkin's gay movie" – that would be *Cruising* (1980), a film whose Greenwich Village shoot was to say the very least controversial – though this adaptation of Crowley's landmark 1968 off-Broadway play, using the original cast, got there first. Save for an overture of scenes on the streets of New York City, *The Boys in the Band* takes place almost entirely in the apartment and rooftop deck of astringent, feckless Michael (Kenneth Nelson) as he prepares a get-together for Harold (Leonard Frey) on the occasion of his 33rd birthday – a gathering of gay men that soon descends into a welter of backbiting and put-downs. Between this and *Cruising*, it may be said that Friedkin hasn't exactly produced glossy advertisements for the joys of queer life – though I don't know who would claim that the cisgender heteronormative experience comes off well in, say, *Sorcerer* (1977) or *Killer Joe*.

With a limber mobile camera, Friedkin brings a corresponding visual energy to the verbal thrusts and parries of Crowley's dialogue, though at times this seems like a busy front to conceal an anxiety over appearing relaxed and at home in the milieu. If the script's flurry of tossed-off "queens", "fairies" and "faggots" no longer has the shock value it may once have had, such attractions as Frey's imperiously stoned performance and Friedkin's handling of a sudden cloudburst that drives the party indoors give *The Boys in the Band* a shelf-life beyond its original groundbreaking function.

Disc: Friedkin has a track record of providing very entertaining audio over weirdly colour-timed home-video releases of his films. His streak stands unbroken.

FILMS BY COSTA-GAVRAS

THE CONFESSION

France 1970; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray; 138 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: interviews, Chris Marker TV documentary 'You Speak of Prague: The Second Trial of Artur London' (1970), vintage news reports, essay by Dina Iordanova

STATE OF SIEGE

France 1972; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray; 121 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: interviews, vintage news reports, essay by Mark Danner

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

However minor a voice Costa-Gavras may have seemed to become since he obeyed the call to Hollywood in the 1980s, there's no overlooking the systemic shock he provided to European art film with his first six pictures, beginning with 1965's *The Sleeping Car Murders* and further supplied by *Z* (1969), *The Confession* (1970) and *State of Siege* (1972). At a stroke, the European political thriller was born, cranked with both the



Party politics: *The Boys in the Band*

energy of genre film without any loss of realistic sophistication or based-on-fact immediacy and the balls-of-the-feet pertinence of protest usually reserved for anti-war documentaries. (No wonder Chris Marker got himself involved; he enlisted as the still photographer on *The Confession*, a movie that explicitly references both *La Jetée* and *Night and Fog*.) More than even that, Costa-Gavras's nervous, head-swivel, slam-cut filmmaking reinvented the idea of political film – righteous outrage now came at you in fifth gear, sober but white-knuckled and urgent.

Think about how many filmmakers have aspired to this combo of substance, style and temperature in the almost half-century since, from Alan J. Pakula to Steve McQueen. *Z* has never not been celebrated but *The Confession* and *State of Siege* are now rejoining the conversation, on Criterion Blu-ray editions that are nothing if not definitive. All were in their day hot to handle, because their subjects – communist totalitarianism and the pervasive party loyalties that excused it and US skulduggery in Latin America – were still very much in play and subject to a dense public argument.

The Confession depicts the tribulation of Artur London, a Czech bureaucrat suddenly sucked into the vortex of Eastern Bloc persecution and torture, leading to the black parade of the 1952 Slánský show trials. It's a brutally methodical film, elucidating the Sovietised process of converting a man of staunch communist principles (Yves Montand's troubled soulfulness has never been more convincing) into a soulless puppet following a self-annihilating script. There may be no clearer depiction on film of the Orwellian tools by which modern autocracies control their citizens.

As scholar Dina Iordanova points out in an essay included with the Criterion disc, this may be the first film explicitly about the machinations of torture, which alone makes it a sociocultural touchstone just as relevant today as it was during the Cold War. But the movie is also made with Costa-Gavras's customary brio and confidence; a potentially repetitive or even dull movie spectacle (sleep deprivation etc) is fashioned into a mega-charged ordeal, with even the most ordinary two-people-in-a-room scene galvanised by a hunting camera, breathless cuts and a scrupulous attention to gazes locking and crossing over space. Raoul Coutard's rather astonishing colour cinematography only ticks up the amperage, with some of the most fascinating and haunting interior lighting ever committed to film.

State of Siege is the calmer film – ironically, as it casts a cold eye on the *mano a mano* between homicidal dictatorship and grassroots terrorism-cum-freedom fighting. (The deeper irony still is that Costa-Gavras shot it in Chile less than a year before the 1973 Pinochet coup.) The film is set in an unnamed Uruguay, its rich political fabric – bureaucrats, parliamentarians, journalists, generals, double agents, citizens on the street – revolving around the young, floppy-haired Tupamaros who kidnap an American (Montand again) they know to be a secret CIA spook responsible for training the government's forces in assassination and torture. It doesn't end well (based on the case of assassinated CIA torturer Dan Mitrione), but the filmmaker's sympathies are clearly against the ruling class and their American henchmen, and the prescient scent of generational fury is in the air.

Costa-Gavras structures the film around a series of massive, roving, rooftop-view tableaux of social militarisation, as the army and police scour the urban landscape for the insurrectionists; using real bystanders and routinely stretching for miles, it is realism not only in detail but in scale, the sense of an entire society churning and eating itself alive.

Disc: The new digital restorations are gorgeous and respectful of the period grain (although of the two, *State of Siege*'s darks are sometimes greenish). The extra interviews are choice, largely because Costa-Gavras is a tireless storyteller, but the Marker making-of doc is a prize.

LA DANZA DE LA REALIDAD

Alejandro Jodorowsky; France/Chile 2013; Pathé/Region B Blu-ray; 132 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: presentation of film at Cannes, trailer

Reviewed by David Thompson

At the 2013 Cannes premiere of *La danza de la realidad* – 'The Dance of Reality' – Nicolas Winding Refn introduced the film's 84-year-old director (looking way younger) as "the last king of cinema". Alejandro Jodorowsky's return to the big screen after more than 20 years' absence takes the form of an autobiographical tale that, for all its expected self-indulgent and fantastical elements, could possibly convert those who have rejected him in the past.

Set in Chile in the 1930s, the film follows the life of the young Alejandro through his pre-adolescent years, but focuses more on the transformation of his father from a Stalinist ogre to a humbled pauper, learning compassion and understanding on the journey. It's very much a family affair. The director's son Brontis Jodorowsky appeared as a young boy in his father's notorious mystical western *El Topo* (1970), and now he incarnates the overbearing patriarch, with the director popping up from time to time to identify with his beleaguered former self and give him encouragement (the connections multiply with music by son Adan and costumes by wife Pascale Montandon). The film was, moreover, shot in the town of Jodorowsky's childhood, Tocopilla, with the cooperation of the local population.

While behind the film's stylistic excesses are clearly the influences of Fellini (especially *Amarcord*) and Buñuel, Jodorowsky's vision of life as the feverish product of the imagination

has now been tempered by a sweet humour. The family's outsider status, as Ukrainian Jews living in a Catholic dictatorship, is underlined throughout; the large-breasted mother constantly sings her role (she's played by opera star Pamela Flores); and there is a roving band of disabled men who cause regular havoc in response to their persecution. But if the surrealistic context is laid on with varying degrees of subtlety (not always aided by some cheap digital effects), Jodorowsky remains nothing if not convinced by his uninhibited desire to shock and entertain, and much of the film has an ebullience and sweep that belie his age. Problems mainly arise in the second act, in which the father is separated from his family on a quest to assassinate the local dictator, and the oedipal dynamic vanishes from the screen until his eventual return home as a much-changed man.

Greater rigour in the editing might have resulted in a more digestible film, but Jodorowsky has made significant strides as a storyteller and by the end, with the family setting sail for a new life together, he has earned the standing ovation he received at Cannes.

Disc: The digitally shot film has transferred well, with the Spanish dialogue subtitled in English or French.

DROWNING BY NUMBERS

Peter Greenaway; UK 1988; MediumRare/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 114 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: new interview with Peter Greenaway, 1988 documentary 'Fear of Drowning'

Reviewed by Charlie Fox

"He's only interested in games and chocolate puddings..." Peter Greenaway's twin predilections for cerebral mischief-making and sensual extravagance are much trumpeted, and *Drowning by Numbers* finds them achieving a



Captive audience: *State of Siege*

particularly delicious satisfaction. (That line from the film is an arch self-portrait.) It's the most loveable puzzle from his regal 1980s phase, a children's story of adults up to dark antics. It features three women, all called Cissie Colpitts, who drown their doltish husbands and have the crime concealed by Madgett the coroner (Bernard Hill as a droll but thwarted satyr).

This fairytale-like trio of symmetrical stories is decorated with eccentric marginalia – invented games, playground folklore, reflections on water – which illuminate its fastidiously ordered but jesting symbolic framework. Greenaway scatters *sub rosa* hints about entomology, nods to Dutch Golden Age painting and phantasmagoric tributes to Edwardian illustrator Arthur Rackham. The lighting game the director began with cinematographer Sacha Vierny in *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985) continues apace as they capture the Suffolk landscape at an unreal pitch of ripe autumnal colour, creating a weirdly animate place where full-beam moonlight weaves through witchy trees and dreamtime skies are chequered by fireworks. Such textural richness is veiled

by a gentle, end-of-the-afternoon melancholy. The little figure of Smut (Jason Edwards) is Greenaway's boyhood double, fascinated by taxonomies and finding increasingly intricate ways to make them ward off chaos.

Greenaway often looks too singular to produce a genuine inheritor but here Wes Anderson could be his kindhearted nephew.

Disc: Gorgeous transfer, great extras.

FILMS BY JESS FRANCO

VAMPIYROS LESBOS/SHE KILLED IN ECSTASY

Jess Franco; West Germany/both 1971; Severin Films/Region-free Blu-ray; 89/80 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: interviews, original German trailers, Spanish bootleg of 'Vampyros Lesbos', soundtracks CD, 'The Devil Came from Akasava'

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

I first came to know the films of Jesús 'Jess' Franco at university. My roommate was an aficionado of European cult cinema, and I discovered that *Female Vampire* (1975), in addition to offering the attractions of sullenly lovely star Lina Romay, had a lulling pace that helped with the insomnia I was suffering at the time.

The same hypnotic rhythm is evident in *Vampyros Lesbos* and *She Killed in Ecstasy*, two of the six films that Franco made with the Spanish actress Soledad Miranda, who preceded Romay as his muse, before her early death in an car accident in 1970, aged 27. In both films (which were dubbed in German and filmed in ports of call in Turkey and Alicante, Spain), the steady lapping of water – the Bosphorus or the Mediterranean – provides a crucial element of the soundtrack, along with a playlist of twinkly lounge jazz, fuzztone go-go psychedelia, tape-distortion babble and organ-backed sex boogie.

Glazed-over softcore reworkings of material from *Dracula* (*Vampyros Lesbos*) and *The Bride Wore Black* (*She Killed in Ecstasy*), these films are ambient affairs whose soporific pacing – I don't mean this as a pejorative, by the way – is occasionally interrupted by crescendos of dynamic montage and arresting images, such as the wan sun over Istanbul or a purple-cloaked Miranda staring into the middle-distance, her back to architect Ricardo Bofill's baffling La Manzanera resort. Franco's narcotised style is defined by woozy focus, off-kilter framings, the disorienting encroachment of extreme foreground space and bob-and-weave zooms which explore a scene in much the same measured, probing fashion that marks the films' hushed, almost-ritualistic bedroom idylls.

In a world that will never lack for films demanding that a viewer feel, this is pure trance cinema which asks only that we stretch out and drift.

Disc: A respectable treatment of Franco's dreamy duo.

GERMANY, PALE MOTHER

Helma Sanders-Brahms; West Germany 1980; BFI/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 151 minutes; Certificate 15; 1.66:1; Features: theatrical version (Blu-ray only), documentary 'Hermann My Father', trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

"Rather have lice and be alive than no lice and be dead," says an air-raid survivor part-way through Helma Sanders-Brahms's harrowing and strongly autobiographical portrait of the



Drowning by Numbers It's the most loveable puzzle from Peter Greenaway's regal 1980s phase, a children's story of adults up to dark antics

CENSORS AND SENSIBILITY

Kinoshita Keisuke's humane filmmaking instincts were frequently at odds with Japan's militarised wartime culture

KINOSHITA AND WORLD WAR II

PORT OF FLOWERS/THE LIVING

MAGOROKU/JUBILATION STREET/ARMY/

MORNING FOR THE OSONE FAMILY

Kinoshita Keisuke; Japan 1943-46; Criterion Eclipse/

Region 1 DVD; 82/89/73/87/81 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Alexander Jacoby

One of the leading Japanese directors of Kurosawa Akira's generation, Kinoshita Keisuke (1912-1998) has enjoyed occasional festival and retrospective screenings, but only two of his films, *Twenty-Four Eyes* (1954) and *The Ballad of Narayama* (1958), have previously been released on subtitled DVD in the West. This box-set, containing Kinoshita's first five films, dating from the wartime or immediate post-war period, permits western audiences a comprehensive exploration of his formative years, and an insight into the trials facing artists in an era hostile to free expression.

Kinoshita was, by instinct, a humanist. In the liberal, pacifist post-war era, *Twenty-Four Eyes* condemned the tragedy of war. But 1943, when Kinoshita (like Kurosawa) made his directorial debut, was not an auspicious year. The Film Law of 1939 imposed severe restrictions on the content of Japanese films; pre-production censorship had been implemented. These films show Kinoshita's humane and pacific inclinations at odds with the demands of militarism.

The most famous example of this tension is *Army* (1944), which traces the experiences of a military family over the decades leading to WWII. Ikeda Tadao's didactic script is filled with injunctions to duty; the mere possibility that Japan might lose a war is shouted down. But Kinoshita's style expresses a dissident view. The climax, in which a mother, brilliantly played by Tanaka Kinuyo, follows her enlisted son through the streets as he marches off to war, rejects heroics to record her love and anxiety. Kinoshita cleverly circumvented pre-production censorship; the script blandly stated that "the mother sees the son off". As Michael Koresky writes in the disc's booklet, "What makes this part of the film subtly subversive is purely cinematic – expressive cutting, the variations in camera distance, Tanaka's stunning performance." Kinoshita wasn't allowed to make another film until war's end.

The other films in this set also take place on the home front. Kinoshita's debut, *Port of Flowers* (1943), starts off as a lighthearted comedy drama set on a remote southern island. Two conmen, each pretending to be the son of a deceased local shipyard owner, arrive planning to defraud the villagers; the outbreak of war teaches them responsibility. Again there is forceful rhetoric about the war effort, but Kinoshita seems more

interested in the leisurely delineation of the community and in the creative potential of cinema: in one Ophulsian scene, footage of Penang is projected on to the window of a railway carriage as the woman who once loved the dead man recalls her dreams of living with him abroad.

Jubilation Street (1944) is a community drama of a kind common in Japanese cinema, focusing on the inhabitants of a single street.

But this community is facing eviction, since the street will be appropriated for military purposes. "The country is at war," says one character, a test pilot. "We can't pursue our personal wishes." But Kinoshita's detailed portrait of the doomed community gives the film a degree of pathos, capturing the personal dimension the censors were keen to suppress.

Repeated exhortations to fight and die mark these films as products of a militarised culture, but certain elements almost evoke British wartime cinema. The opening sequence of the rural melodrama *The Living Magoroku* (1943) stylishly re-enacts the 1573 Battle of Mikatagahara. In the aftermath, the camera tracks over slain samurai; a dissolve reveals a modern memorial to the battle; a cut shows soldiers training on the same land. The moment almost evokes *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), in which a transition from past to present reminds us of the cultural values being fought

The films remind us that many Japanese responded much as people the world over tend to in wartime, rallying round the flag

for. It's easy to dismiss films made to champion a reprehensible cause. But these remind us that many Japanese responded much as people tend to the world over in wartime, rallying round the flag and doing what they are taught to see as their duty.


The final film in the collection, *Morning for the Oson Family* (1946), dates from the post-war American Occupation. Censorship codes remained strict, though priorities were reversed; now, Japanese films had to preach the new gospel of liberal democracy. Fascinatingly, *Morning for the Oson Family* shows how this volte-face is expressed through situations and events paralleling those in the wartime films. Like *Army*, it is a family film, but the dissidents are heroes, and the deaths of servicemen are tragedies to be mourned. The film opens with the family singing 'Silent Night'; we later learn that Mrs Oson studied at an international school in Yokohama. Such evidence of westernisation would have been suspect in wartime; now, it provides an enlightened counterweight to the uncle's destructive nationalism.

Hisaita Eijiro's script makes the film's message explicit. Eldest son Ichiro, a writer, explains his strategy for publishing implicit criticisms of the war; within minutes, he is arrested. A blacklisted artist declares that Japan should be peaceful and promote tourism. But Kinoshita's subtle use of the camera and delineation of character keep the focus on the human suffering the war has caused. The end of that conflict brings morning not only for the Oson family, but for Japan. In the new, more liberal Japan, Kinoshita was to craft some of the masterpieces of post-war liberal humanist cinema. 🇯🇵



Mother love: Tanaka Kinuyo in *The Army*

New releases

 lives of a mother and daughter during WWII and afterwards (Sanders-Brahms was born in 1940), and this is one of the more upbeat lines. But it could hardly be otherwise given the subject – especially since the film was made in 1980, when the psychological toll of the Nazi period had rarely been anatomised as bluntly as this by any German filmmaker, let alone from an explicitly feminist perspective in which domestic spaces (intact and bombed-out) play host to encounters as psychologically bruising as anything on the largely offscreen battlefields of Normandy or Stalingrad. The way these experiences take a palpably physical toll on protagonist Lene dominates the final act in a way that might seem overly symbolic on paper were it not for the headlong fearlessness of Fassbinder veteran Eva Mattes's performance.

Mattes has the lion's share of screen time, primarily as Lene, asking her husband Hans (Ernst Jacobi) to make her pregnant so that she can retain a living part of him in the event of his disappearance; she also appears in two marrow-chilling cameos as Polish and French victims of the atrocities that Hans helps to facilitate, to emphasise the fact that he is (unwillingly) killing women just like Lene. It's little wonder that their relationship becomes strained over time, for all their talk of "reaccustoming" themselves to each other. Those who saw the film on its international release in the early 1980s will have to do some reaccustoming too, as this recent Deutsches Kinemathek/Bundesarchiv restoration reinstates half an hour removed from the film following a poor reception at its Berlin premiere.

Disc: The pin-sharp restoration tends to stress the textural differences between purpose-shot and archive footage, but this heightens the impression of Sanders-Brahms directly interrogating the past. Only the Blu-ray release includes both cuts of the film, but both editions include Sanders-Brahms's moving 1987 companion-piece documentary *Hermann My Father*, in which she accompanies her father as he reluctantly revisits Normandy for the first time since the war. Booklet essays by Anna Sanders (the director's daughter), Erica Carter, Margaret Deriaz and Caren Willig provide helpful historical context relating both to the Nazi period and the New German Cinema of the 1970s.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

Terence Fisher; UK 1959; Arrow Video/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate PG; 87 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: audio commentary with Marcus Hearn and Jonathan Rigby, 'making of' documentary, 'The Many Faces of Sherlock Holmes', Christopher Lee archive interview, booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Terence Fisher's solid yet atmospheric adaptation gingers up Doyle's much filmed story with distinctively Hammer diversions into sadism, ritual sacrifice and a skulking tarantula. In the same spirit, Peter Cushing's Holmes, wiry, waspish and studded with authentic eccentricities (those scribbled shirt-cuffs), combines Sherlockian rationalism with a novel interest in the uncanny. His mercurial theatricality positively requires the offsetting gravitas of André Morell's Watson.

Despite the hefty gothic alterations made to the original story, the best of which is Fisher's



The home front: Germany, *Pale Mother*

exuberant, window-busting, peasant-roasting, wench-hunting 18th-century prologue ("Let loose the hounds!"), it's a respectful rendition, the first to give Holmes the correct period setting. "Hammer in its pomp," Mark Gatiss observes happily in the extras, about production designer Bernard Robinson's lush, velvet-and-dark-wood Victoriana – this is the film where the Hammer look crystallised, setting the template that US and Italian horror films would borrow in the 1960s.

Marcus Hearn and Jonathan Rigby's knowledgeable commentary chews over the vexed question of whether the film should be seen as a fully fledged Hammer Horror or appreciated as a boundary-pushing A-certificate murder mystery. It's a dilemma further complicated by the curious incident of the dog in the fright mask, the over-friendly Great Dane that famously fails to convey the terror of Doyle's hellish hound in the climactic scene. As the great man himself asserted: "That which is clearly known hath less terror than that which is but hinted at and guessed."

Disc: An excellent transfer, which faithfully reproduces cinematographer Jack Asher's warm use of Technicolor and supernatural green lighting in the Dartmoor ruins. The bulging, first-rate extras package boasts a new documentary crammed with crew reminiscences.

OUT OF THE CLOUDS

Basil Dearden; UK 1955; StudioCanal/Region 2 DVD; 85 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: introduction by Charles Barr, stills gallery

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

"A bedazzling ensemble piece... unforgettable characters... compulsive viewing" burbles StudioCanal in its publicity material, suffering from a serious case of the overclaims. Charles Barr gets it about right in his intro, referring to "period charm" and a "nostalgic view" of 50s international air travel (not a security guard in sight). Propeller planes, long-defunct airline logos (BOAC, Pan Am) and talk of four-day London fogs add to the nostalgia. And all the stewardesses are offily well-spoken.

The last of the multi-storyline dramas churned out at Ealing by the reliable workhorse team of director Basil Dearden and producer/screenwriter Michael Relph, *Out of the Clouds* is set mostly at Heathrow airport and provides vignettes of staff and passengers – in particular an ex-pilot turned chief duty officer (Robert Beatty) and a young Jewish couple who meet in transit and fall for each other. Much loved bit-part faces show up – James Robertson Justice,

blustery as ever; Sid James; Megs Jenkins; Esma Cannon; Bernard Lee; a just-pre-*Ladykillers* Katie Johnson as a nervous passenger. Chirpy cockney cabbies and comic foreigners fill out the cast.

Briefly the film touches on more serious matters when the young Jewish woman (Margo Lorenz) talks of her wartime experiences in Germany, reminding us that the horrors of WWII were barely a decade away. But for the most part this is pleasant, undemanding entertainment, typical of Ealing in its declining years.

Disc: As Charles Barr notes, this is a complete version, with all incidental cuts restored.

POLISH CINEMA CLASSICS VOLUME III

THE CRUISE/CAMOUFLAGE/SHIVERS

Marek Piwowski/Krzysztof Zanussi/Wojciech Marczewski; Poland 1970/77/81; Second Run/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 66/97/102 minutes; 1.78:1/1.66:1/1.42:1; Features: interviews, booklets

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Second Run continues its invaluable trawl through the externally lesser-known byways of Polish cinema history. Marek Piwowski's almost plotless *The Cruise* is one of the country's all-time cult hits, and although many of the jokes require a native grasp of Polish language and culture to fully appreciate, the delectable visual gags, salty sarcasm and knowing mockery of everything from patriotic pretension to absurdly overweening officialdom are far more universal. "Deal with them," orders the harassed captain of the river cruise ship – but does he mean in the sense of expelling blatant fare-dodgers or has he fallen for their pretence that they're there on official business?

Krzysztof Zanussi's *Camouflage*, alongside Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble*, is widely acknowledged to have kickstarted the 'cinema of moral anxiety' movement that dominated late-70s Polish film discourse. A witty critique of diplomatic niceties in academia (the film is set in a summer school for linguists), it has numerous wider-world parallels to do with institutional politics in general, and not merely those operating in communist Poland. The first-time viewer might well sympathise with idealistic young teaching assistant Jarek (Piotr Garlicki), but it's his older, much more worldly colleague Jakub (Zbigniew Zapasiewicz) who imparts the most resonant home truths – and who also charts the course of Jarek's psychological journey with unnerving prescience.

There's a similarly strong undercurrent of black humour in *Shivers*. Superficially, this has nothing in common with David Cronenberg's identically titled 1975 opus, aside from the fact that they're both notionally about a physical or psychological invasion that leaves a vulnerable 'host' utterly corrupted from within. In the case of Wojciech Marczewski's film, the victim is a teenager forced to cope with raging hormones and his father's recent arrest, while being compulsorily incarcerated in a summer camp run on explicitly Stalinist lines. As he proved in the dazzling *Nightmares* (available on English-subtitled DVD in Poland), Marczewski is one of Polish cinema's most confrontationally honest chroniclers of adolescence, and the



Television

THE WIRE: THE COMPLETE SERIES

David Simon USA 2002-08; HBO/Warner/All regions
Blu-ray; Certificate 18; 3,600 minutes; 16:9. Features:
episode commentaries, featurettes ('The Last Word',
'The Wire Odyssey'), prequels (Young Prop Joe, Young
Omar, Bunk and McNulty), 'The Wire' reunion

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

Presumably at some point in the next decade or two, aspects of *The Wire* will start to look dated – the clothes and hair and cars will look camp, the acting may start to feel a little awkward and hammy. Maybe even the drugs, the poverty, the political paralysis and the terminal inattention of the media will look fantastically noughties, though this April's riots, in response to the death in police custody of Freddie Gray, suggest that Baltimore's problems aren't going away. One aspect has already dated, apparently: the series was originally broadcast in a 4:3 format, to fit a television screen, but in the 13 years since then the TVs have got bigger, and so this first high-definition reissue is in a widescreen format. Purist fans have denounced this outrage, complaining that David Simon's masterpiece has been butchered. It's more complicated than that, though.

Simon himself has written thoughtfully about the gains and losses, technical and artistic, brought by the switch to widescreen. All five seasons were shot on 35mm film, the first two with the possibility of later widescreen transmission in mind; so the extra width of image was there already. But a lot of problems remained, of sound synchronisation, continuity, camera flare, visible filming equipment – some solvable by painting or editing, others demanding a reframing of the shot (the thing that makes the purists howl). HBO began the process without any input from Simon; but after he indicated his interest (how forcefully he had to do that is a matter for speculation) they postponed the release so that he and Nina Noble, his producer, could oversee it.

Viewers with extraordinary memories and hyper-acute critical sensitivities may find that the differences from the original chafe at times, but the stories and the acting are what make *The Wire* extraordinary, and these are unscathed. In any case, the density of plot, language and social observation mean that every re-viewing is a new experience – new details emerge, others fade into the background, fresh ironies become apparent, and your appreciation shifts.

On a second go at the first two seasons, things that I disliked the first time around seem fine. I used to think Clarke Peters's plummy turn as Lester Freamon, the veteran "natural-born police" who's spent 13 years in exile on pawnshop duty, was too contrived for a naturalistic setting. Now I notice how far the whole project, for all its grounding in social observation, is shaped and emphasised by unembarrassed theatrical touches; Peters seems perfectly attuned to that. Ziggy Sobotka, the free-wheelingly self-destructive son of the dockworkers' union boss in season two, irritated me: one of the great things about the programme was that nobody acted out of character to advance the plot; everybody acted rationally or at least explicably within the constraints of their circumstances, except Ziggy.



The Wire Every re-viewing is a new experience – new details emerge, others fade into the background, fresh ironies become apparent, and your appreciation shifts

But a friend argued to me that Ziggy's irrationality is the product of insight – he acts insane because he's the only one who sees clearly just how bad things are; and I'm starting to see that view. Conversely, this time I notice the unevenness of Dominic West's American accent far more; the novelty has faded from the celebrated sequence in which West's Detective McNulty and his partner Bunk Moreland investigate a crime scene using only the word 'fuck' and its variants.

Watching *The Wire* has its dangers:

pessimism, or just exhaustion (I've done far too many late-night sessions the past few weeks), but never boredom. How many other TV programmes can you say that about?

Disc: The upgrade to HD gives a sharper picture and richer colours (particularly noticeable in some night-time scenes). The extras are mostly the same as those provided with the DVD edition, though quality and balance of sound on the audio commentaries are perceptibly improved. The depth of Simon's pride in his cast and his concern with authenticity are striking. The two features on the series's making and influence are smartly put together; the trilogy of (very short) prequels is sweet but slightly silly. The one novelty is a reunion of cast members, with Noble and Simon, at New York's PaleyFest last autumn. One thing that emerges from this conversation is how slow most of the cast were to grasp the significance of what they were doing, and how fearful they were in the early stages that something so dark would be cancelled.

YOUR CHEATIN' HEART

Michael Whyte; UK 1990; BBC/Second Sight/
Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 285 minutes; 4:3


Reviewed by Robert Hanks

Like John Byrne's earlier *Tutti Frutti*, *Your Cheatin' Heart* is set in a kind of transatlantic dream Scotland, in which the music and cultural reference points are nostalgic and American (rock 'n' roll in *Tutti Frutti*, country and western here), the language emphatically Scots – peely-wally and pokey hats.

That oddly inflammable mixture generates much of the drama's energy, assisted by the contrast between Tilda Swinton's otherworldly Cissie Crouch and Ken Stott's door-kicking, nose-breaking psychobilly Fraser Boyle. A lot of the time, they are enough to keep the momentum going, and Byrne's script has a pleasing way of keeping its backstory close to its chest. Along the way there are plenty of curiosities, visual and narrative, to pique the interest – a neon ice-cream cone snowing heroin; a line-dancing biker gang; unexplained nods to *Kind Hearts and Coronets*; Eddi Reader, singing her heart out. Interesting to notice that abusive men and lost children play a part in both dramas. But the direction is often frustratingly slow, the script padded and the multiple intertwining plotlines don't resolve in a satisfactory way; and the curiosities begin to look like cunning ploys to divert attention from gaps in the narrative.

Disc: No-frills transfer of what I suspect was an undistinguished original. **S**

New releases

 fact that this is partly autobiographical makes it doubly disturbing.

Disc: As with previous instalments in this series, all three films are sourced from recent digital restorations and look splendid. Illuminating video interviews with Zanussi and Marczewski adorn the relevant discs, while each film has its own booklet essay by Daniel Bird, Michal Oleszczyk and myself.

SOCIETY

Brian Yuzna; USA 1989; Arrow Films/Region ABC
Blu-ray; 99 minutes; 1.85:1; Features: new audio commentary by Brian Yuzna, new interviews, featurettes, Screaming Mad George music video and other music videos, 'Society: Party Animal' comic sequel (limited edition only), Yuzna Q&A, original artwork, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Out of the morassic age of huge teen mullets, John Hughes high-school psychodramas and squishily analogue genre FX came this unnerving, unheralded freak, veritably the Bosch *chef-d'oeuvre* of 1980s home-video theatre.

Anyone who rented out a VHS of Brian Yuzna's *Society* expecting an orthodox horror film in structure or thrust was probably appalled. This is largely because the film's Marxist subtext is never quite 'sub'. Amid the snitty air of teenage temper tantrums and movie-movie Beverly Hills hyper-privilege lurks a critique of class predation that would've suited Buñuel, exploding in the film's climax into a taboo-busting surrealism which edges the movie towards a kind of mating between William S. Burroughs and Thorstein Veblen.

As cheaply made and ramshackle as the film is, the brilliance of *Society* – written by Rick Fry, Woody Keith and an uncredited Yuzna, who had cut his teeth producing Stuart Gordon's first three features – is that its vision of societal cannibalism is couched in the familiar and angsty perspective of children not quite understanding what their own parents are doing, loudly, behind closed doors. This universal anxiety doesn't eventually lead to a symbolic creature or force but to the workings of society itself.

Saddled with an intolerable mullet, the black-haired LA high-school hero (Billy Warlock) becomes more than a little suspicious of his blond parents and sister as they prepare for her debutante debut, and the movie's only half done with us when it becomes disturbingly clear that there is some kind of institutionalised incest afoot, shared by the snotty upper-crust teens and leering grown-ups around them and kept secret from the lower classes. Warlock's exiled brat just doesn't suit the bloodline, it seems. Of course the crux of the matter isn't sex at all, but something far worse, a rousing imagined (and plasticised, by prosthetics master Screaming Mad George) metaphor-in-action fleshy orgy-feast, the likes of which are as hard to describe as they are vividly evocative of every kind of aristocratic cooptation and consumption.

In short, the brisk generalisation of Yuzna's title is nothing if not apt. The mutability of the body is symbolic itself of the many ways the underclasses can be absorbed and drained by the wealthy, but the visual details can leave a mark, particularly the fat rich men in their



Bosch nosh: Society

underwear slaving over warping young flesh and then absorbing it into theirs like amoebae. It might be fruitless to search for a modest B movie quite as outrageously rich with both Freudian qualm and political disgust.

Disc: Frankly, the love bestowed on Yuzna's quickie might be more than is required. The voluminous extras – including four interviews with Yuzna – focus on the mundanities of how the film was made, not on its meaty ideas.

TELL ME LIES

Peter Brook; UK 1968; Blaq Out/Region-free
DVD; 108 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: interview with Peter Brook, interview with restorers, trailers

Reviewed by David Thompson

Shot during the summer of 1967, *Tell Me Lies* was Peter Brook's cinematic spin on his RSC theatre production *US*, a title that could be pronounced both ways, posing the question of how Britain should react to the Vietnam War. The show, which had grown out of the confrontational style of Brook's *Marat/Sade*, with musical numbers created by the same team of poet Adrian Mitchell and composer Richard Peaslee, featured members of the company (including Glenda Jackson and Michael Williams) confronting the audience with sketches, speeches, songs and poems such as 'Tell Me Lies... About Vietnam'.

Key scenes from *US* were filmed in 1966 by Peter Whitehead as *Benefit of the Doubt* (available on a BFI DVD), but the following year Brook found the budget to take a small crew on the streets, recording 'Angry Arts Week' in Camden, protests in Trafalgar Square and marches in Grosvenor Square, counterpointing his actors on their quest to find a suitable response to the conflict with newsreel footage and reportage. At one point, a tour of Soho stands in for 'queer bars' in Saigon, where American soldiers discovered a sexuality hitherto suppressed within them.

Inevitably dated and inconsistent in tone, *Tell Me Lies* is a fascinating snapshot of an age when a photographic image of a child burnt in napalm bombing was sufficient to provoke people to take to the streets. One of the film's highlights is a staged London drinks party in which figures including Tom Driberg and Peregrine Worsthorne are pushed for their views on how Britain could respond to the conflict, and a brandy-swilling Kingsley Amis takes a very positive line on American intervention. In another part of the room, a highly eloquent Stokely Carmichael – the activist and future

Black Panther leader then paying a clandestine visit to the city – brings the arguments round to the treatment of African Americans by the white majority. While the political comments remain pertinent, certain sexist remarks about the women present feel amazingly casual now.

The film (like the play) also tells the largely forgotten story of Norman Morrison, the American Quaker who burnt himself in front of the Pentagon, with an improvised re-enactment at the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square that in these security-conscious days would be unthinkable.

Disc: A beautiful restoration by French hands (from materials preserved by the BFI). This release has non-removable subtitles, and the fascinating interview with Brook is conducted in French.

THUNDER ROAD


Arthur Ripley; USA 1958; Timeless Media Group/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 92 minutes; 1.5:1

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Robert 'Baby, I Don't Care' Mitchum made his front of indifference into a trademark, but if anything in his filmography was undeniably a personal project, it would be *Thunder Road*. The story, about a legendary moonshine runner named Luke Doolin pressured on one side by the law, on the other by the Memphis crime syndicates, was written by Mitchum, who starred as Doolin opposite his own son James as Luke's younger brother Robin. Mitchum also co-wrote (and sang a version of) the movie's theme song, 'The Ballad of Thunder Road'; and, scuttlebutt has it, took over some of the movie's direction, officially credited to Arthur Ripley, who'd come out of retirement for the gig.

Nothing in the workmanlike, sometimes clunky fashioning of *Thunder Road* suggests the hand of the same Arthur Ripley who produced such stylish items as *Voice in the Wind* (1944) and *The Chase* (1946). Shot-on-location material filmed in North Carolina is awkwardly intermixed with soundstage material performed against what looks like department-store portrait-photography backdrops, and the car chases are, by any contemporary standard, pretty staid affairs, mostly consisting of vehicles cornering hard in front of the camera – though Luke icing a would-be assassin by flicking a lit cigarette into his driver's side window is still pretty cold-blooded. Nevertheless, Mitchum's film tapped a deep vein of folkloric yearning – he located the ideal of western self-sufficiency alive and well in the contemporary south-east, playing a larger-than-life outlaw who expresses his ethos in a countrified, poetic patois. ('I don't fix,' says Luke, 'I don't buddy up with one livin' soul.')

Some years later the writer Grover Lewis, profiling Mitchum on the set of *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), asked him about *Thunder Road*, which had become a cult item with drive-in audiences. 'It was received for true, for real. Still is,' said Mitchum. Asked why he hadn't dedicated himself to more such projects, Mitchum replied with the characteristic *menefreghismo* that had made his Luke Doolin a hillbilly icon: 'I choose not to work.'

Disc: A marked improvement on previously available versions. 

Lost and found

STREET SMART

OVERLOOKED FILMS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE ON UK DVD OR BLU-RAY

This ingenious anomaly in the Cannon canon is powered by the compelling against-type performances of its two leads

Reviewed by Naben Ruthnum

The opening credits of *Street Smart* (1987) roll over the sound of an increasingly desperate journalist named Jonathan Fisher pitching ideas to the editor of the (fictional) *New York Journal*. As the credits end, the logo for The Cannon Group appears on screen. Cannon, the subject of the recent documentary *Electric Boogaloo* (see 'Cannon fodder', *Rushes*, *S&S*, July), is now known chiefly for its contribution to the low-budget action genre of the 1980s, producing such titles as the Chuck Norris *Missing in Action* films and giving Charles Bronson a few rounds of *Death Wish* sequels. The Cannon logo might suggest that Fisher, the journalist-protagonist played by Christopher Reeve, will be drawn into a sleazy, violent world from which he will emerge only through avenging violence of his own – but that's not the film we get.

Cannon's output may have been weighted towards the populist and schlocky, but its owners, Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus, always harboured ambitions to be taken more seriously, and so their catalogue also boasts work by such directors as John Cassavetes (*Love Streams*), Jean-Luc Godard (*King Lear*) and Franco Zeffirelli (*Otello*) among others. *Street Smart* sits among such anomalies. Directed by Jerry Schatzberg, the renowned photographer and director best known for his New American Cinema markers *Puzzle of a Downfall Child* (1970), *Panic in Needle Park* (1971) and *Scarecrow* (1973), *Street Smart* (mostly shot in Montreal, though set in New York) is now remembered if at all for being Morgan Freeman's breakthrough. The then relatively unknown actor received an Oscar nomination for his portrayal of pimp Leo Smalls, aka Fast Black. Freeman would never again play a guy this nasty: in one scene, Fast Black holds a pair of scissors to the face of one of his prostitutes, while he asks her which eye she'd prefer to keep.

Cannon agreed to make the film on condition that Reeve signed up to make a fourth (and ultimately infamous) *Superman* movie. Perhaps their attention was diverted, for *Street Smart* didn't get much of a push, and has remained underseen since, despite good reviews from Roger Ebert and Janet Maslin (who called it a "frankly lurid film capable of fine, unexpected subtleties").

The film's premise is simple, ingenious pulp. In the course of that opening pitch meeting, Jonathan Fisher comes up with the idea of doing a lifestyle piece on a Times Square pimp. The editor (played by Andre Gregory) assents, but with the clear implication that if the story's not great, Fisher's writing career is finished.

Fisher hits the streets and tries to get an interview, but receives only threats and silence



Oh Superman: Morgan Freeman and Christopher Reeve in *Street Smart*

Reeve plays the part as a clean, slick scumbag. It's jarring to picture him playing Superman the same year

in return. A handsome, Harvard-educated white man, he's baffled to encounter a world to which he has no access. He tries approaching prostitutes, speaking to one named Punchy. As played by Kathy Baker, Punchy is another bright point in the film: she's fun, cute and engaging, both a realist and a professional about her work, but she still won't give Fisher any useful information.

So Fisher makes his story up. He invents an interview with a pimp named 'Tyrone', full of flashy jive-talk and folksy ignorance. The city eats it up. It ignites Fisher's career, and

soon he's where he believes he belongs: on camera, doing a segment called 'Street Smart' on the nightly news, where he exposes the rip-off realities of the city to an audience sitting watching, comfortably removed, at home.

The lie starts to crack under a terrible dual pressure: the DA's office is convinced that 'Tyrone' is actually Fast Black, and Fast Black is just as sure that Fisher somehow studied him for his story. Fast Black has been accused of a murder in which he was, indeed, involved. The DA wants Fisher to reveal everything he knows about the pimp. The pimp wants Fisher to give him an alibi. The only way out is to admit the lie and flush his career.

The mounting threats drive Fisher to try telling the truth, but when this fails, he decides to do what he was always best at: he lies, and leverages his privilege to make sure that he gets away clean. In a freeze frame at the end of the film, Schatzberg points us to the last victim of the journalist's game: a young black man looking at a long time in prison, years that he owes to the men who manipulated him into an inescapable position.

The subtlest role in the film goes to Reeve, and he doesn't try to soften his character's edges – he plays the part as it lies on the page: as a clean, slick scumbag. Watching *Street Smart*, it's jarring to picture him playing Superman the same year. Here, he's using that genetic package of perfect American good looks not for good, but to do what ambitious American men have been doing for years: winning the game by whatever means necessary. Fisher is tall, beautiful and white. He controls media and perception, and his lack of morals and chameleonic ability to slide between roles enhance his power. It's little surprise that Fisher is the only one to emerge from *Street Smart* without a mark on him. The bruising that Fast Black gives him in one scene has faded long before the memorable ending. 9

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID



"[Freeman] turns a haphazardly written Times Square pimp into something so revealing that it's a classic performance... he gives the role of Fast Black a scary, sordid magnetism, and he gives the picture some bite... when Jonathan gains the cunning to out-street-smart Fast Black it's a joke – an Ivy League white boy's dream of glory. We're supposed to take his victory as proof that he's learned his lesson and become a dirty realist. Actually, it's just a confirmation that the plot is a sham."

Pauline Kael 'New Yorker', 20 April 1987



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Dream team: Charles Brackett (left) co-wrote 13 movies with Billy Wilder (right), including *Lost Weekend* and *Sunset Blvd.*

MAKING A ROPE OF WORDS

"IT'S THE PICTURES THAT GOT SMALL"

Charles Brackett on Billy Wilder and Hollywood's Golden Age

Edited by Anthony Slide, Columbia University Press, 448pp, £23.95, ISBN 9780231167086

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Pauline Kael's 1971 essay 'Raising Kane', though discredited as an attempt to attribute virtually sole authorship of *Citizen Kane* (1941) to its co-writer Herman Mankiewicz, remains a brilliant evocation of the Algonquin-to-Hollywood group, the New York journalists and playwrights who were "responsible for that sustained feat of careless magic we call 'thirties comedy'". Charles Brackett was one of them. As Kael observed, he took over

from Mankiewicz as drama critic of the *New Yorker* when the latter departed for Paramount in 1926. These diaries begin six years later, when Brackett was in turn summoned "out to the Coast for four weeks at \$750 a week". That first engagement at RKO was a well-remunerated flop, but things were not going well back east, where Brackett was having difficulty getting his plays produced. He describes reading his *roman-à-clef* *Entirely Surrounded* to Dorothy Parker, who found her own portrait less than amusing: "She said it was a grand book and that I was a son-of-a-bitch."

Brackett returned to Hollywood shortly afterwards, this time to Paramount, and stayed there. In 1936 he was "teamed with Billy Wilder, a young Austrian I've seen about for a year or two and like very much", and it is almost entirely for their collaboration, beginning with Lubitsch's *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* (1938), that he is known.

The late Richard Corliss, in *Talking Pictures*, a book intended – much like Kael's essay – to correct the excesses of auteurism, nonetheless found little evidence to contradict the popular view that Brackett was merely a "resourceful private secretary to an immigrant never completely confident in his grasp of English". At no point do the diaries suggest that Brackett was the unsung senior partner, but they do dispel a few myths – for example that Brackett thought he was too good to adapt James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* (1944), which Wilder co-wrote with Raymond Chandler. In fact Brackett, who reports staying up all night to read Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, was put out by the temporary rift, and ended up making an uncredited contribution to the script.

Moreover, Brackett's testimony reveals that director-worship was hardly an invention of the auteurs. In one entry, Brackett, who

was closely involved in the affairs of the Academy, describes a meeting with four Oscar-nominated directors to sort out their clips for the 1945 ceremony: "Directors, it seems, are vastly underestimated by the public and some whisper of their function must reach the outer world. It seems I have to write the stuff."

In truth, the diaries do not probe very deeply into the mysteries of creation – the writing goes well, or it doesn't; he and Wilder are getting on, or not. And often not – Brackett regularly contemplates a split from as early as 1938, though with increasingly mixed feelings as he comes to feel that, unlike Wilder, he would not flourish outside the partnership. But perhaps this lack of introspection can be taken to substantiate Kael's characterisation of the Algonquin Round Table as "fast, witty writers, used to regarding their work not as deathless prose but as stories written to order for the market". Similarly her notion that they "had gone to Hollywood as a paid vacation from their playwriting or journalism, and screenwriting became their only writing" is fully borne out by Brackett, who early predicted that "excursions into the cinema are departures from my regular career and probably a mistake".

The book is packed with revealing cameos from some of the greatest names of Hollywood's greatest era, and is a valuable record of the texture of life there in those years. But it really takes flight as that era comes to an end, and as Brackett and Wilder transmute the experience of decline into their last and finest film, *Sunset Blvd.* (1950). The duo first began discussing writing "a picture about Hollywood" after making the

The book is packed with cameos from some of the greatest names of Hollywood, and is a valuable record of the texture of life there

dire *The Emperor Waltz* (1948), reportedly the second most expensive film in Paramount's history (the pictures got big); and its gestation coincided both with the studio system's sudden disintegration and with the decision of Wilder and Brackett to part company. They committed to the project in July 1948, two days after Brackett read the eulogy at the funeral of D.W. Griffith, a Hollywood pioneer who did not survive the routinisation of the business in the 1920s.

When Norma Desmond tells Joe Gillis that screenwriters like him will "make a rope of words and strangle this business", there is no doubt where Brackett's sympathies lie – with Desmond, and with what he here calls "the fantastic physical beauty silent pictures achieved and which talking pictures have never quite reached". The diaries show how Brackett, very taken with Gloria Swanson, pushed Wilder to keep her on-screen persona "human". One of his last acts before the final breach was briefly to put on the director's hat, ordering a retake of the famous line that gives this book its title – the kind of reversal of roles that is common in screenplays but supposedly rare in life. ☺

THE MANY LIVES OF CY ENDFIELD

Film Noir, the Blacklist, and Zulu

By Brian Neve, University of Wisconsin Press, 260pp, \$34.95, ISBN 9780299303747

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

When Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings started ferreting out Hollywood's red sympathisers, they can hardly have expected to have made such an impact on the British film industry. Director Joseph Losey and writer-producer Carl Foreman were just two of the highest-profile US exiles who opened another chapter of their careers across the Atlantic, and in 1951, just when it seemed things were about to take off for him in Hollywood, Cy Endfield had followed the same path.

Just over a decade later, he would claim his own niche in his adopted country's cultural consciousness with that bracing tale of colonial derring-do *Zulu* (1963), an unlikely trajectory for a fur trader's son from Scranton, New Jersey, who spent his formative years in politically committed theatre in New York and Quebec. Such associations were to prove his undoing later on, for although Endfield was never a Communist Party member, those were the circles he moved in. Notwithstanding a deepening disaffection from the cause in the post-World War II period, the crunch came when he was named in the testimony of screenwriter Martin Berkeley (someone he barely knew), and faced the stark choice of being a friendly witness for the committee, or keeping his own counsel in the knowledge he might never work in the US again. Endfield left his estranged wife and daughter behind, packed his case and boarded the Queen Mary.

This first ever full-length study of Cy Endfield's life and works certainly brings out what an agonising decision that must have been, driven



Exile and the United Kingdom: Cy Endfield

by a fundamental repugnance towards selling out his former comrades and colleagues, even if it came at a heavy personal and professional price. Neve's detailed and diligent research shows how Endfield battled his way through sundry Monogram B pictures, to arrive in 1950 at a slightly more generous level of independent production, facilitating the spiky Dan Duryea muck-raking saga *The Underworld Story* (1950), and the even more striking study of misadventure and mob rule *The Sound of Fury* (1950). As cash-strapped ordinary schlub Frank Lovejoy, a war veteran with a family to support, hits the slippery slope towards robbery and murder, it's a sympathetic cautionary tale, until the final reel unleashes a terrifying lynch mob, fired up by incendiary newspaper headlines, who storm the jail where the suspect's being held. The footage, captured with documentary authenticity, is potent enough, but perhaps even more startling is the thought behind it, that here we're shown behind the curtain, a glimpse of what happens when rationality fails and raging feral instinct takes over.

That uncomfortable reckoning with our capacity for brutality appears to run through the best work in Endfield's subsequent British output – from the ferocious conflict played out by rival haulage lorries in *Hell Drivers* (1957), to the sense of ignoble slaughter tempering any gesture towards imperial triumphalism in *Zulu*, and even the way *Sands of the Kalahari* (1965) contextualises the bitter survival battle of a group of plane-crash survivors with the vicious instincts displayed by the local baboon population. Clearly, when Endfield was on his game, he married a certain bleakness of vision with a confident formal command, and yet Neve leaves us with a picture of an individual of widespread talents and interests, who, in Britain at least, never really managed to get his film career on a solid footing, always somehow scrambling from one project to the next, until opportunities petered out in the early 70s.

The revelation of the book is, in a way, the extraordinary variety of Endfield's accomplishments. Many film directors also find success in TV commercials, but few are also highly respected by fellow magic practitioners as an expert in card tricks, a student of nuclear physics, and indeed a published chess expert (who even designed a portable chess set marketed by the World Chess Championship). With all that in mind, the book's title 'The Many Lives of' is evidently justified, though it's perhaps understandable that Neve rather struggles to get a grasp on this most mercurial of personalities. It's fair to say that he never really gets under Endfield's skin, but does a valuable and thorough job of following his tracks, filling the pages with all sorts of fascinating nuggety detail, like his uncredited work on the screenplay for Jacques Tourneur's classic British-made horror *Night of the Demon*, and the memorable image of Endfield driving his Morris Minor round Grosvenor Square in celebration at the American Embassy's decision to renew his passport after several stateless years in the mid-50s. ☺

LOIS WEBER IN EARLY HOLLYWOOD

By Shelley Stamp, University of California Press, 384pp, £24.95, ISBN 9780520284463

By Pamela Hutchinson

Posts on the relatively new, but hugely popular, blog *Shit People Say to Women Directors* fall into two broad categories. First, there is breathtaking workplace misogyny; and second, male incredulity that a woman has been hired instead of the expected man. We need to find a way to talk about women in film that recognises their achievements without repeatedly emphasising their rarity. Among the many lessons of Shelley Stamp's invigorating new book is the note that referring to a female film director as an "exception to the rule" may erase their status rather than add to their significance. Weber, for example, deserves to be remembered as a leading director, writer and actor of the 1910s and 20s. But hyperbolic claims that she was the only working female director of her time have shifted her into the position of a 'novelty' and therefore outside of the broader narrative of silent film. Stamp writes that this "forgetting" creates "a skewed narrative with profound consequences for subsequent generations of filmmakers and filmgoers".

Stamp's critical biography leaves the reader in no doubt of Weber's auteur credentials, a director and writer with a style of her own, once rightly acclaimed in the same breath as D.W. Griffith. Her films were often described as feminine, which is arguable, but her politics were strictly feminist (she ran successfully for mayor of Universal City on a suffragist ticket) and Stamp draws out the progressiveness of her work with rigorous and illuminating readings. Contrasting the disconcerting angles and split-screen compositions of perhaps Weber's best-known film, the home-invasion thriller *Suspense* (1913), against the cross-cutting in similar films by Griffith, Stamp finds that "she embraced the potential of her own cinematic authorship to craft alternate visions of femininity onscreen". Detailed examinations of 'issue films' such as *Hypocrites* (1915) or *Where Are My Children?* (1916) reveal a director of bold editorial judgement who bridled at censorship. That the weighty, allegorical *Hypocrites* with its beautiful double-exposures is now often cited as a test case for nudity on screen is another example of the way Weber's career has been misremembered. The flesh in question belongs to the figure of 'Naked Truth' who visits feckless contemporary Americans with a mirror that exposes their double-standards. That Weber's lecture could be mistaken for lechery is almost funny.

Stamp's book also describes Weber's network of female comrades, notably at Universal, which released 170 films directed by women between 1912 and 1919, as well as other high-profile connections, such as screenwriter Frances Marion and the actor-writer-director Jeanie MacPherson. The 'Early Hollywood' this book describes emerges as a place that nearly became an established haven for female creative talent. Weber herself made efforts to encourage younger women in the field, and to protect them from the 'casting couch'. That the book then goes on to describe the masculinisation of the industry, and the ways in which Weber's status



Silent wonder: Lois Weber was once rightly acclaimed in the same breath as D.W. Griffith

was eroded within it, is as disheartening as it is educational. Stamp relates how, in the 1920s, studio publicity framed Weber not so much as an author of films, but a star-maker, a woman with the intuition to discover and nurture 'naturally' beautiful and gifted younger women, including Mildred Harris ('Mrs Charlie Chaplin') – thereby excising her efforts as both actor and director. And that was just the beginning.

Weber may not have been alone as a woman within the industry, but in almost everything she did, she swam against the tide. For most of her career, she worked alongside her husband Phillips Smalley, and her persona as a married middle-class woman may have increased her fan appeal. The fact that she outshone him,

*Weber may not have been alone
as a woman within the industry,
but in almost everything she
did, she swam against the tide*

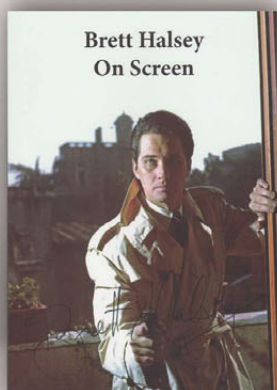


Lois Weber's *Suspense*

however, was a difficult truth that magazines attempted to address with pointed humour ("Mrs Smalley and husband") and twee domestic scene-setting, but ultimately could not ignore. Like her peers DeMille and Griffith, Weber wanted to 'uplift' the artform, but where they chose expensive epics and literary adaptations, she made films with a social conscience that critiqued public policy and unequal relations between the sexes – most famously *The Blot*, her 1921 film about middle-class poverty. In the 1920s, Weber railed against flappers, preferring a screen type with "brains and character", who was "neither wild nor prudish". Despite studio attempts to recast her subject matter (birth control, marriage) as the stuff of sex comedies, critics were liable to accuse her of sermonising or featuring "dull-brained weeping women". That her career dwindled after the mid-20s speaks to her escalating invisibility, but Hollywood has a way of adding insult to injury. Stamp cites *The Unshod Maiden* (1932) a mocking sound re-edit of her 1916 film *Shoes*, in which "Weber's nuanced consideration of the new consumer economy and its relationship to female sexuality was reduced to a series of crude jokes about sexual assault".

Recent excellent books such as Mark Garrett Cooper's *Universal Women* and Hilary A. Hallett's *Go West, Young Women!* have related the neglected story of women in early Hollywood. Stamp's book joins them and ends with an attack on histories that have ignored, excluded or relegated her subject to a sidebar. Lois Weber, Stamp argues, can no longer be ignored. This essential book is equally clear on her right to be remembered and the processes by which she has been forgotten. **S**

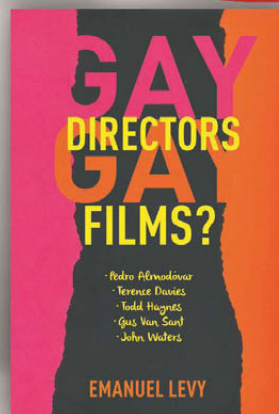
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BRETT HALSEY ON SCREEN

Edited by John B. Murray. Foreword by Brett Halsey. Quacks Books, 260pp, paperback, £10, ISBN 9781904446613
Brett Halsey started as a heart-throb in teen pictures (*The Cry Baby Killer* with Jack Nicholson, cult flick *Speed Crazy*), moved up to minor classic *Return Of The Fly* with Vincent Price, then into the mainstream with pictures such as *Return to Peyton Place*, opposite Mary Astor. When film production boomed in Rome in the early 1960s, he was one of the Hollywood stars who migrated there, becoming a favoured leading man of Riccardo Freda, Mario Bava, Lucio Fulci and Dario Argento. John B. Murray has compiled a fascinating visual history of Halsey's long career. The book contains images of him with colleagues such as Tony Curtis, Broderick Crawford, Clint Eastwood, Dana Andrews and Susan Hayward. More than 380 black-and-white photos illustrate the unique range of his career.

More info at thesallypress.com



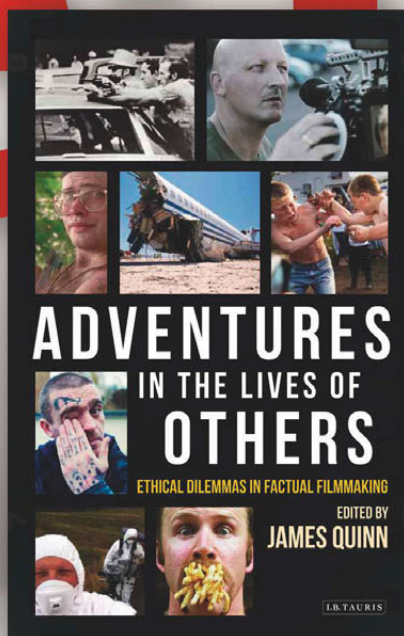
GAY DIRECTORS, GAY FILMS?

Pedro Almodóvar, Terence Davies, Todd Haynes, Gus Van Sant, John Waters

By Emanuel Levy, Columbia University Press, 392pp, paperback, \$25.00 / £17.50, ISBN 9780231152778

Through intimate encounters with the life and work of five contemporary gay male directors, this book develops a framework for interpreting what it means to make a gay film or adopt a gay point of view. Combining critique with in-depth interviews conducted with each director, Emanuel Levy draws a clear timeline of gay filmmaking over the past four decades and its influences and innovations. He compares the 'North American' attitudes of Todd Haynes, Gus Van Sant and John Waters with the 'European' perspectives of Pedro Almodóvar and Terence Davies, developing a comprehensive, up-to-date approach to gay filmmaking in particular and auteur cinema in general.

bit.ly/1QM17Ak



ADVENTURES IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

Ethical Dilemmas in Factual Filmmaking

Edited by James Quinn, I.B. Tauris, 256pp, paperback, £14.99, ISBN 9781784533946
Putting readers into the shoes of the TV professionals, *Adventures in the Lives of Others* brings together an extraordinary range of intimate, candid accounts of the ethical struggles and decisions involved in making documentary film and television. Contributors include legends of the documentary world, eminent filmmakers at the top of their game, emerging directors and producers, and some of the world's most powerful and respected executives. In specially commissioned pieces, they explore the ethical dilemmas involved in uncovering secrets and breaking taboos, accessing closed and dangerous worlds, fighting injustice, filming raw sex and violence and documenting acts of evil, and the many challenges of turning real life into compelling entertainment.

www.ibtauris.com



TOY STORY

A Critical Reading

By Tom Kemper, BFI Film Classics, Palgrave, 112pp, paperback, £12.99, ISBN 9781844576678

The first computer-generated animated feature film, *Toy Story* (1995) sustains a dynamic vitality that proved instantly appealing to audiences of all ages. Tom Kemper traces the film's genesis, production history and reception to demonstrate how its postmodern mishmash of pop culture icons and references represented a fascinating departure from Disney's fine arts style and fairytale naturalism. Foregrounding the way in which *Toy Story* flipped the conventional relationship between films and their ancillary merchandising by taking consumer products as its very subject, Kemper provides an illuminating, revisionist exploration of this groundbreaking classic.

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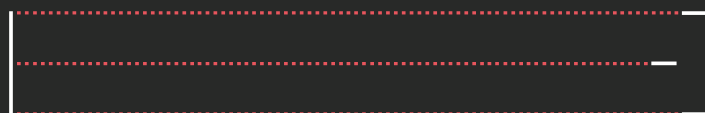
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SAINT MARGARET

The call for Margaret Tait's work to be more widely shown ('Tait of grace', *Wide Angle*, *S&S*, June) is most welcome. It is also a reminder that films and filmmakers need to be rediscovered every few years, sympathetically and to the best standards of preservation of the day, to keep their work in sight. The case for "self-made films", to use Margaret's phrase, is often harder to be heard. There was a retrospective of her work at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1970, and again in 2004, which I curated along with an international touring exhibition of her work for LUX. The LUX DVD of her work sold out several years ago. The centenary of her birth in 2018 will offer another opportunity.

One correction: Buttquoy House in *Place of Work* was not demolished, and still stands in Kirkwall; it was converted into flats by the local council. This can be seen in Tait's film *Tailpiece* (with its workers painting the windows), which was intended as a coda to *Place of Work* and is usually screened accompanying it.

Peter Todd London

OFFENCE OF OMISSION

Pete Moore (Letters, *S&S*, June) suggests that a film like *The Offence* would never get made today with an actor of Connery's stature. Those of us who remember the original play, *This Story of Yours*, at the Royal Court in London, might similarly regret that it could not have been filmed with an actor of Michael Bryant's stature.

Adele Paul Barnet

DAMAGED GOODS

I was surprised to find that your review of *Listen Up Philip* (Films of the Month, *S&S*, June) made no reference to the fact that (spoiler alert) Philip's parents were killed in a car crash when he was young, leaving him to be brought up by his uncle. It is difficult to find Philip particularly appealing, but that piece of information gives a significant clue to what underlies his disagreeable behaviour. He is obnoxious, to be sure, but also damaged.

It was surprising, too, to find Kim Newman omitting from his survey of film versions of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* ('Personality crisis', Home Cinema, *S&S*, July), the most distinguished director to have adapted Stevenson's classic work: Jean Renoir, whose 1959 *Le Testament du Docteur Cordelier* (originally made for television) was the only time he worked with Jean-Louis Barrault, and is one of his best post-war films.

Keith Reader London

OPINION FORMERS

Brian Winston ('Changing fortunes', *S&S*, July) states that documentaries can't effect serious social change, and that's a fair enough point.

As a lifelong resident of Sheffield, I would like to record my attendance at the recent Doc/Fest, the documentary festival held in the city.

A truly international selection included films on Mexican drugs, the Zimbabwean

LETTER OF THE MONTH DAY OF RECKONING



I welcome Michael Pattison's article (*Lost and Found*, *S&S*, July) on Jack Gold's *The Reckoning* (1969), but I am surprised he does not say more about the performance by Nicol Williamson (above). The film is very much built around him. The screenwriter, John McGrath, once said that his previous film *The Bofors Gun* (1968 – also directed by Gold) was written for, and in part about, Williamson; the same might be true of *The Reckoning*. In both films, Williamson's ability to portray existential rage,

despair and self-loathing was used by McGrath to create characters torn apart by class hatred.

It is surely time for a reappraisal of Williamson's career. Other films he made which should be released on DVD include not only *Laughter in the Dark* (1969 – highlighted in *Lost and Found*, *S&S*, March), but also *Inadmissible Evidence* (1968), *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (aka *The Gangster Show*, 1972) and *The Hour of the Pig* (1993).

David Allen Birmingham

constitution, present-day cricket, and Albert Maysles's last film, on Iris Apfel, attended by his daughter. Last year's festival included the world premiere of *Unearthed*, a South African film which examined the process of fracking in the USA with truly disturbing conclusions; this year Rob Moss and Peter Galison's *Containment* considered how the disposal of nuclear waste might concern future generations.

So, Brian Winston, don't fret about serious social change, but think that documentaries (and other films) can add to every individual's fund of knowledge and provide that little bit of information which is always useful in understanding the world.

Michael Hudson Sheffield

RESTORATION HOLMES

Chris Gibbins ('Longer and Wilder', Letters, *S&S*, May) hopes for a release of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* that would include as much as possible of the material cut from the film. In fact, quite a lot of these sequences are available in the US as additional features on the Kino Lorber Studio Classics Region A Blu-ray and the older Region 1 DVD from MGM/UA. Some parts of

the film (the present-day opening, the sequence with the upside-down room and the flashback to Holmes meeting a prostitute) are presented as audio only, playing over stills (footage is lost). The shipboard comedy sequence about naked honeymooners is presented with good image quality, but the soundtrack is lost, and replaced with subtitles. Exclusive to the Blu-ray is an epilogue with brief dialogue between Watson and Lestrade. After a quick check on Amazon UK, it seems that UK home video editions do not include the deleted scenes.

Stefan Andersson Sweden

VERY ZORRY

Michael Curtiz (with a 'z', please note) was one of Hollywood's greatest directors during the classical studio era (1925-1960); it would be respectful of the international film magazine (that's you) to get his name right ('Flying Colours', Books, *S&S*, June).

Alan Maughan By email

Additions and corrections

July p.62 *Amy*, Certificate 15, 127m 43s; p.72 *Comet*, Certificate 15, 91m 38s; p.75 *The First Film*, Certificate PG, 101m 27s; p.76 *Four Corners*, Certificate 15, 119m 20s; p.79 *Hustlers Convention*, Certificate 15, 95m 35s; p.88 *Station to Station*, Certificate 12A, 70m 11s; p.92 *West*, Certificate 15, 102m 12s

I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG



Cinema doesn't get much bleaker than the closing moments of Mervyn LeRoy's savage indictment of the Deep South's prison system

By Thomas Doherty

The bleakest Hollywood ending in the bleakest decade of the American century was the stone cold, pitch-black kiss off in *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932), the gritty Warner Bros 'social consciousness' film directed by Mervyn LeRoy. As timely as the day's headlines, it was a searing indictment of two oppressive regimes: the medieval prison system operating in the Deep South and the economic lock-down suffocating the entire nation, the Great Depression.

The scene hits like a punch in the stomach. After escaping for a second time from a hellish chain gang, James Allen (Paul Muni) risks all to say a final farewell to his lover. He appears like an apparition out of the darkness, a feral presence, hunted and haunted. He clings to her for a last desperate embrace and then backs away to be swallowed up by the night.

"But how do you live?" she wails.

"I steal!" he rasps off camera, the screen an ocean of black, the only sound that of his feet scampering away into the netherworld that is America in 1932. A jarring musical fanfare heralds the sign-off card: 'The End'.

Based on Robert E. Burns's sensationalistic memoir *I Am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang!*, the basic outline of the film would have been well known and pre-sold to contemporary moviegoers. In 1922, Burns was arrested for stealing \$5.80


from an Atlanta grocer and sentenced to six to ten years on a chain gang, a virtual death sentence. He escaped, changed his name and made good in Chicago before being turned in by his estranged wife in 1929. He cut a deal with the state of Georgia to return on softer terms, but was double-crossed and sent back to the chain gang – and then escaped again. When the film came out in November 1932, he was still on the lam.

How the ending came about is shrouded in the usual fog of Hollywood lore. The oft-told story – repeated by director LeRoy himself in his 1974 memoir – is that after a fuse blew on the set and plunged the soundstage into darkness, he took advantage of the serendipitous accident. In a 1933 interview with *Variety*, however, the director told a different story. Discussing "that much-commented-on final fade out", he revealed that the picture was originally going to end with Muni crossing the border from the US into Canada, where he would look back over his shoulder and snarl, "Nuts to you!" But when LeRoy unspooled the scene in a projection booth, it didn't work: the glib tone was all wrong and, even in the nadir of the Great Depression, such an unpatriotic defection would have been unthinkable. Then he figured he'd end the film on the "I steal" line, but with the lights on. Still not right. "And then," according to his un-bylined interlocutor, "he remembered that

The tale of a man beset by an unjust fate, brutalised and betrayed by the system, hit a raw nerve in the bitter winter of 1932

the audience loves a blackout, how the words a scene blacks out on linger in their memory." Save for the beam of light across Muni's stricken face, LeRoy shot it black. "And now, even as he was shooting it, he knew he had it right."

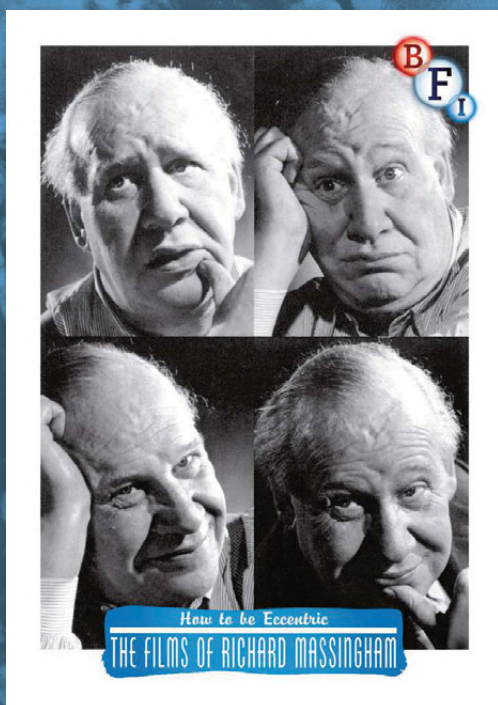
A few exhibitors groused about the downbeat finish. "People want to relax," complained a theatre manager, reported in *Motion Picture Herald*. "Why not make two endings and give an exhibitor his choice?" Despite the bummed ending, however, the film was a huge hit: a man beset by an unjust fate, brutalised and betrayed by the system, hit a raw nerve in the bitter winter of 1932. When Burns was arrested in New Jersey soon after the film's release, the ad-pub boys at Warner Bros were not in the least bit sorry. (New Jersey refused to extradite Burns to Georgia and, in 1945, the state finally commuted his sentence.)

I often think of what it must have been like in 1932 to walk out of *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* into the grim reality outside the theatre lobby. My late father, who had an Irish memory for such things, told me he saw the film only once, during its original run, when he was 13 years old. He weaselled his way into the local cinema for the children's price of ten cents and expected an exciting cops-and-robbers programmer. He was young, but not too young to know that the world around him had changed, that his parents were fearful, that the family was cutting back and that his own prospects had dimmed. Sixty years later, he could still replay the final moments of the film. He remembered leaving the theatre feeling profoundly depressed and a little cheated: this was not what he paid his last dime for. "But," he said, "I never forgot that ending." 



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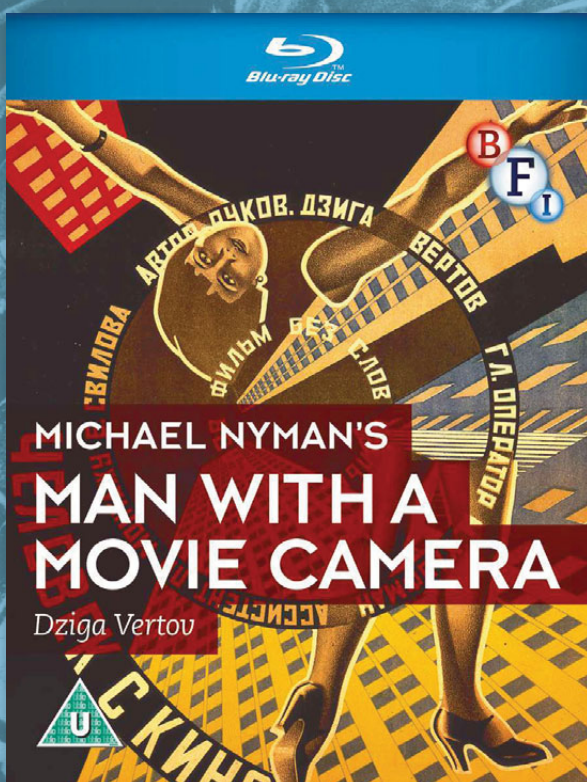


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